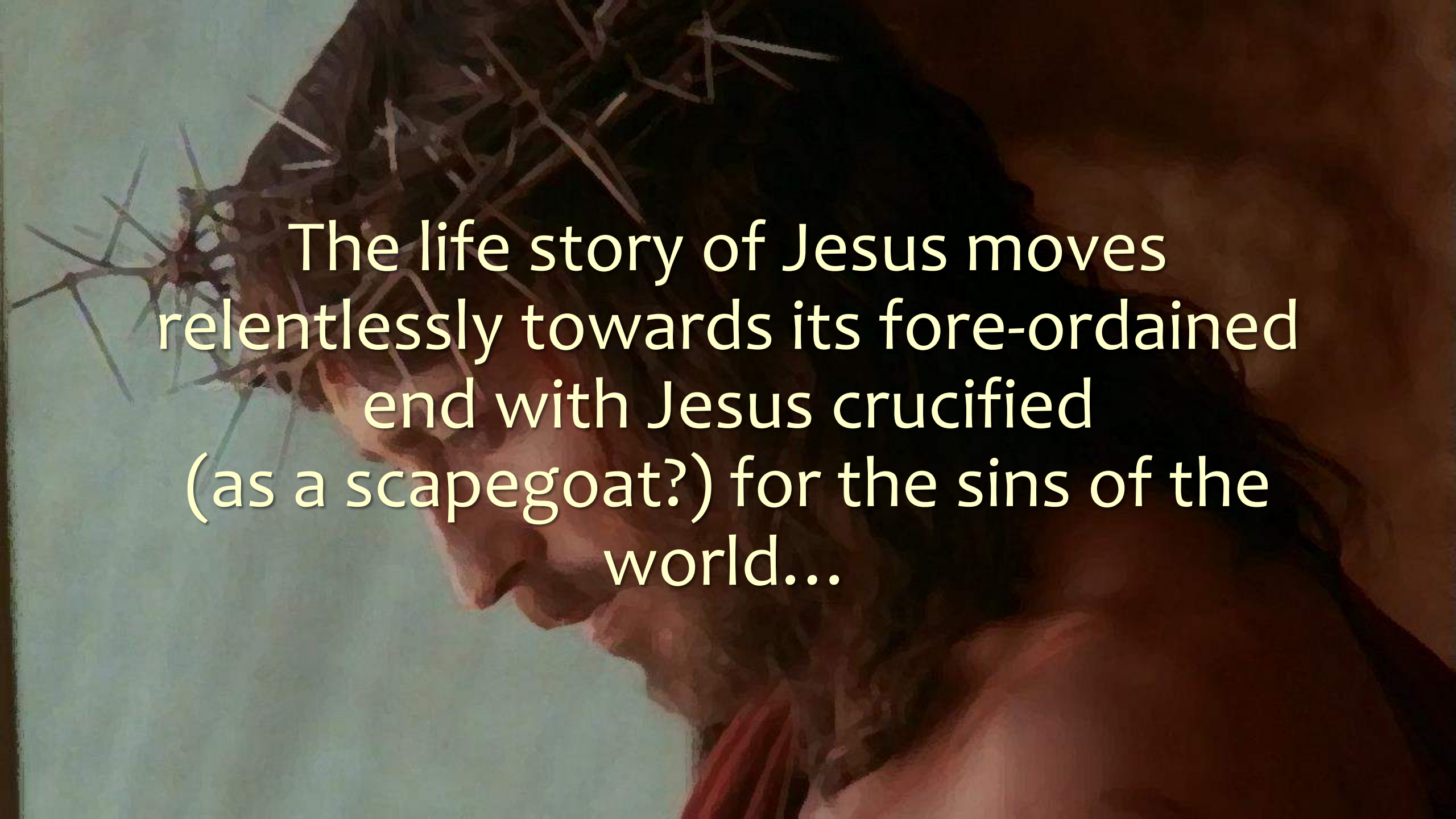
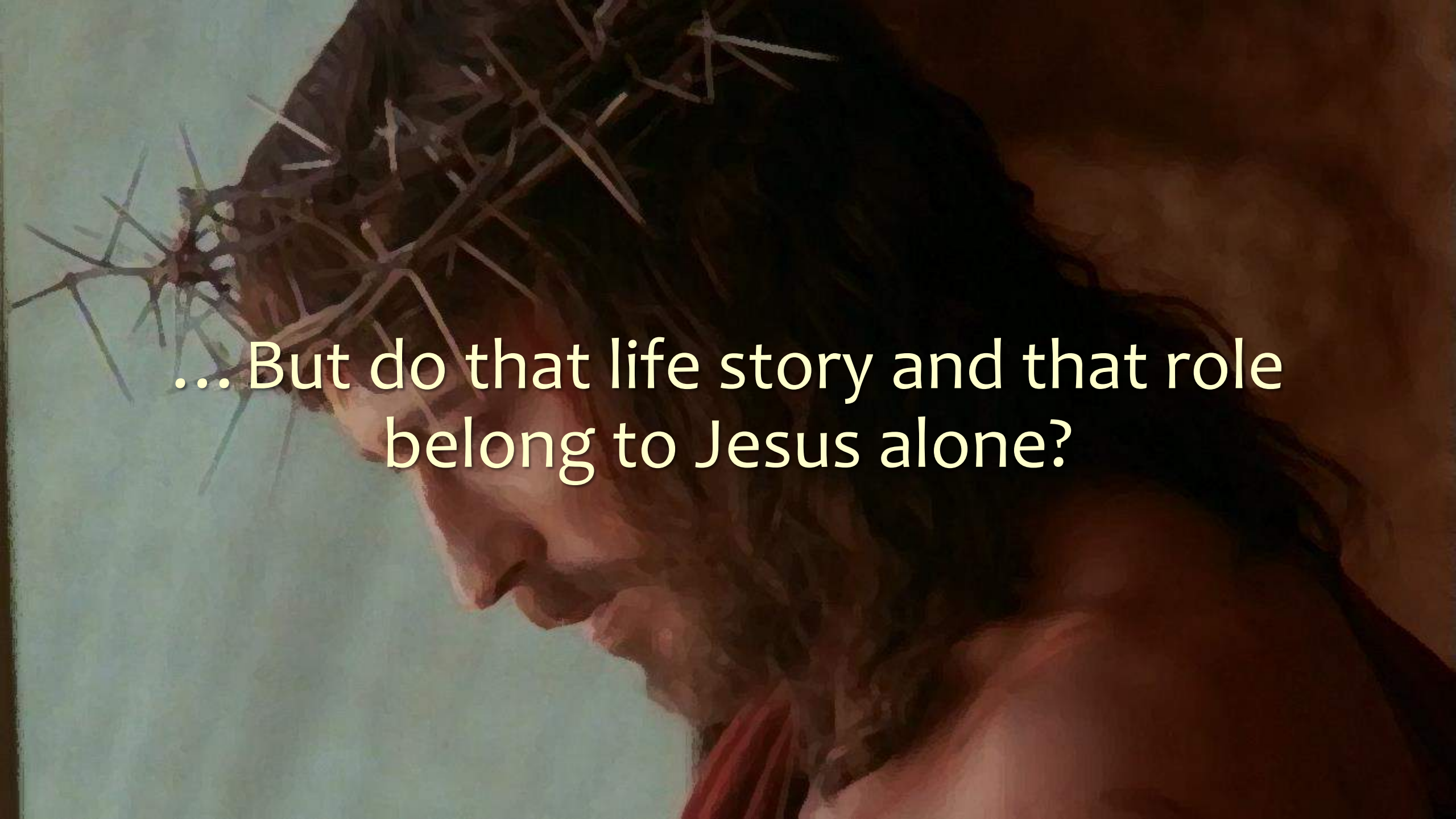


The Hero as Scapegoat: Christ and His Predecessors

Professor Sheila Ager
University of Waterloo

A close-up, painterly image of Jesus's face, shown in profile from the nose up. He is wearing a crown of thorns. The background is a soft, hazy blue and white. The text is overlaid in a yellow, serif font.

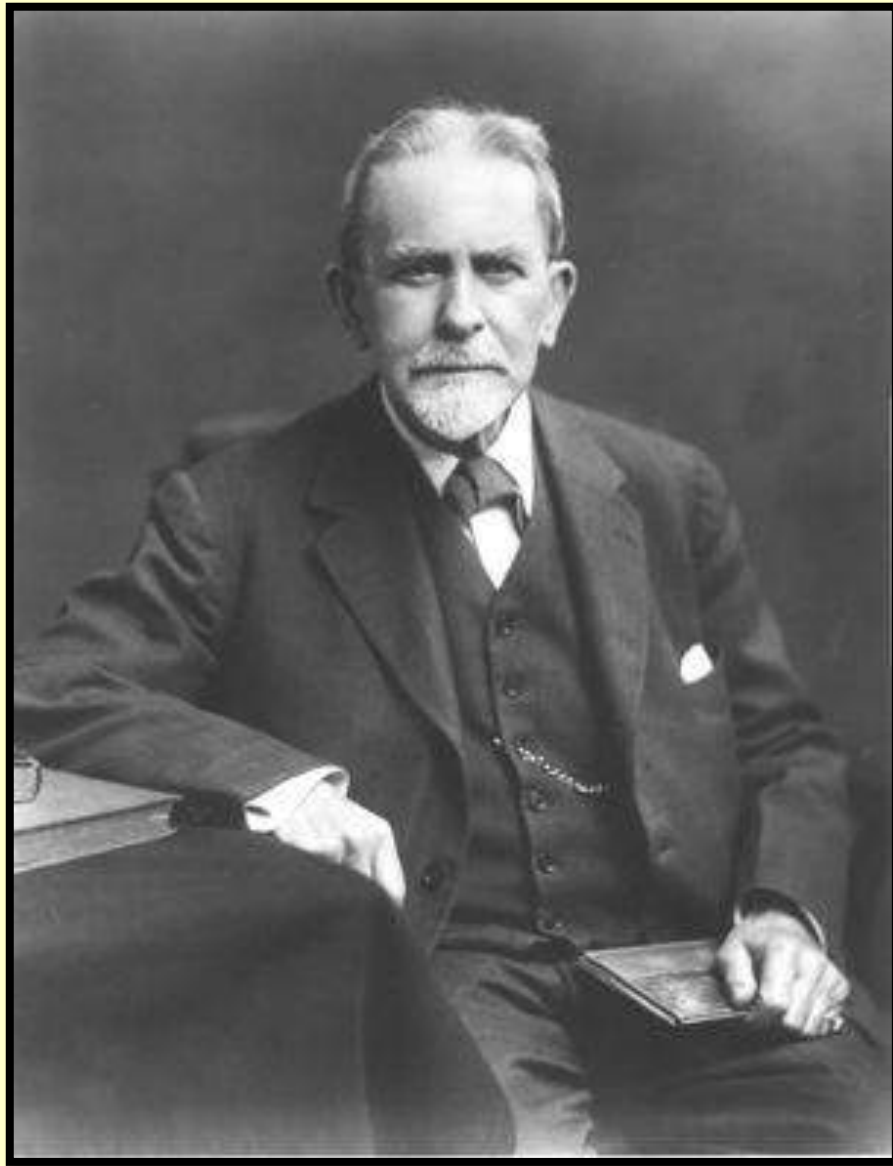
The life story of Jesus moves
relentlessly towards its fore-ordained
end with Jesus crucified
(as a scapegoat?) for the sins of the
world...

A painting of Jesus' head and shoulders, wearing a crown of thorns. The image is in a classical style with soft lighting. The text is overlaid in the center.

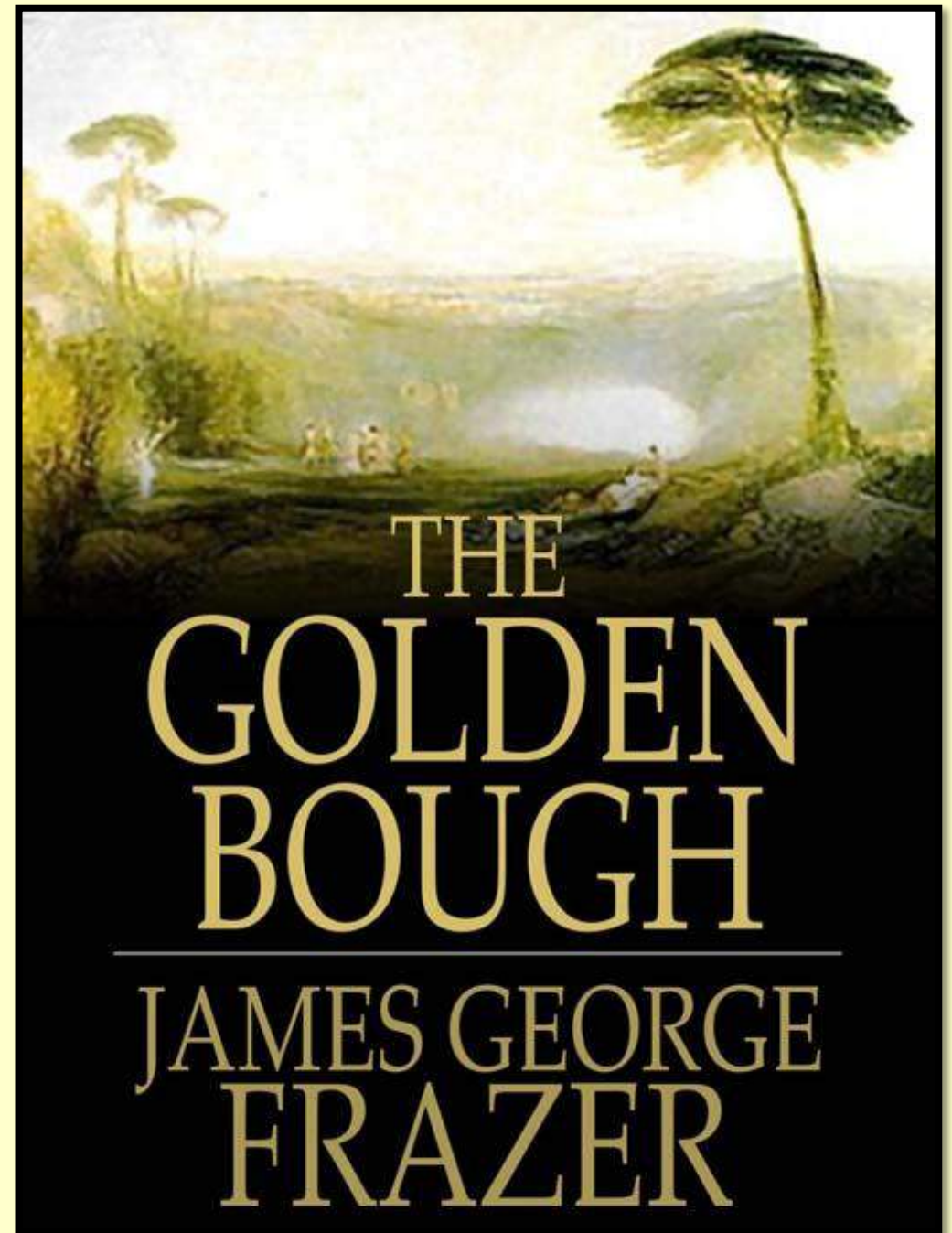
... But do that life story and that role
belong to Jesus alone?

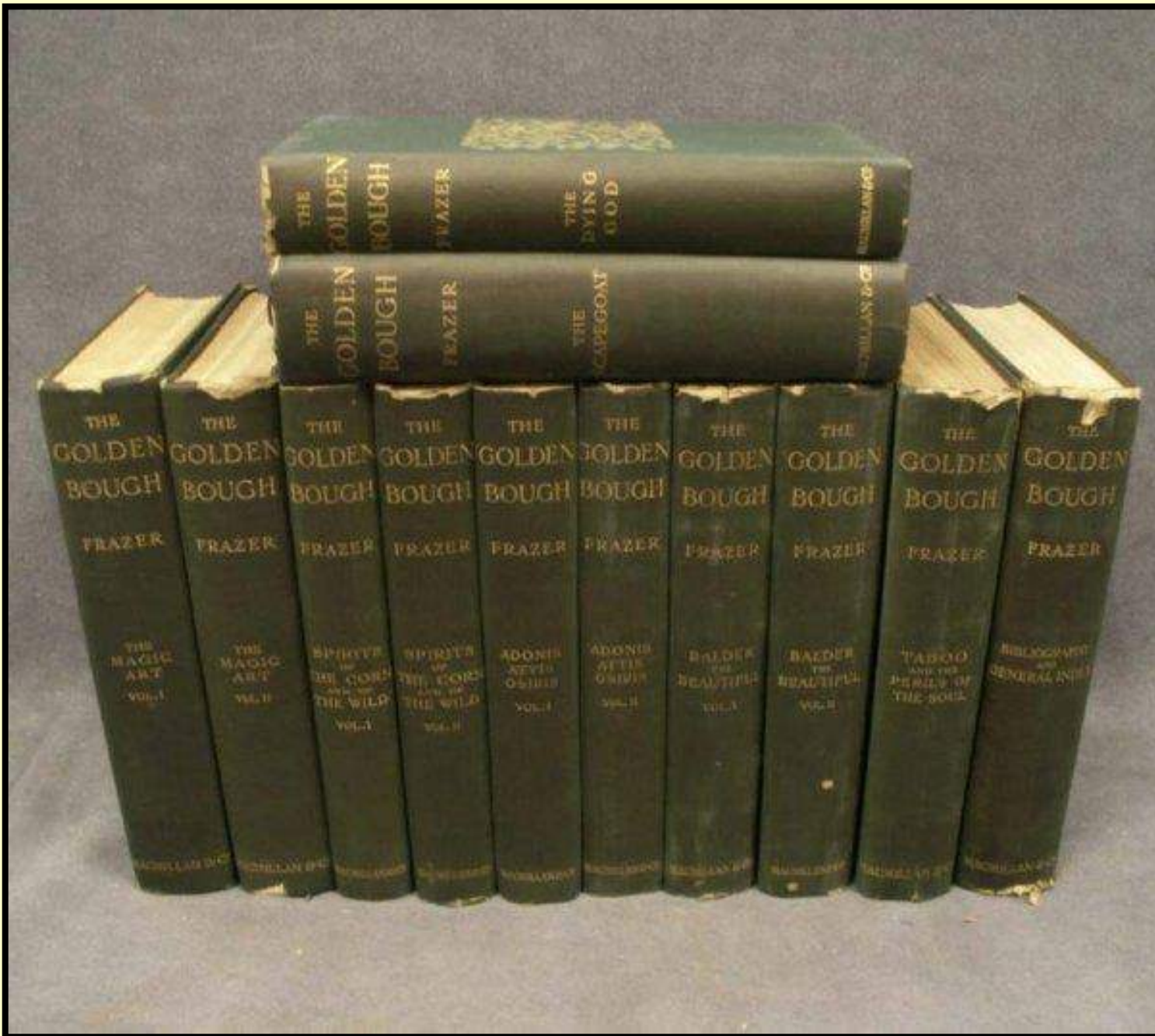
Myth: Structure and Meaning

- Structure
 - Structuralism (Claude Lévi-Strauss)
 - Binary opposition and mediation of conflict
 - Common elements in hero-tales
- Meaning
 - Symbol
 - Freud: myths and dreams
 - Function
 - Aetiology, charter
 - Ritual...



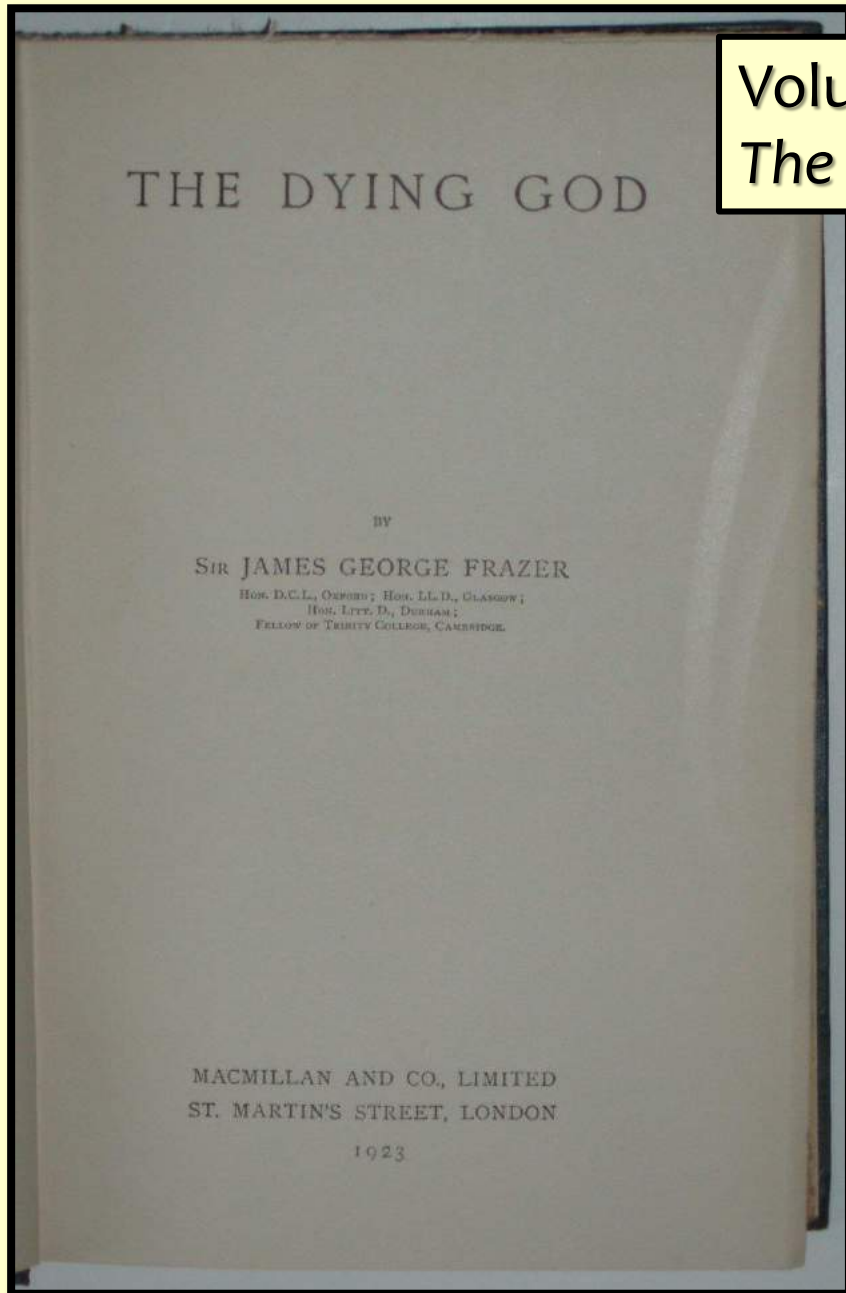
Sir James G. Frazer,
1854-1941



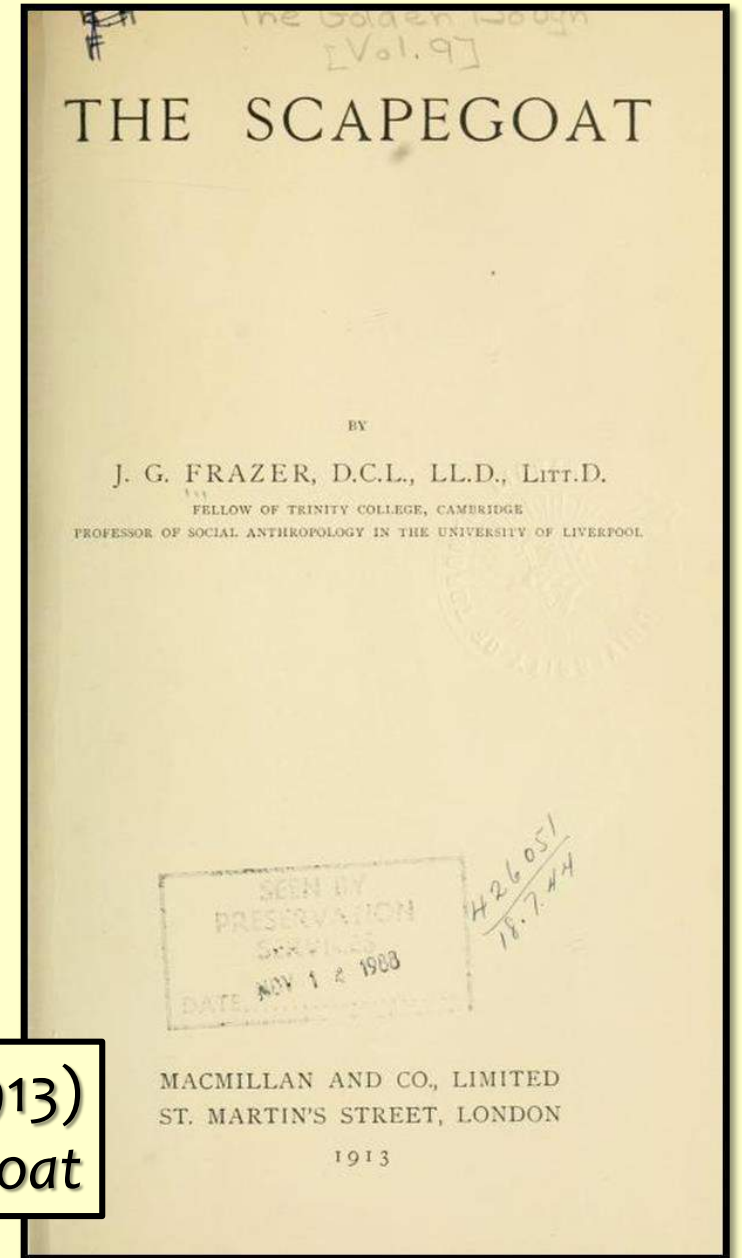


Third edition,
1906-1915

Volume 4 (1911)
The Dying God

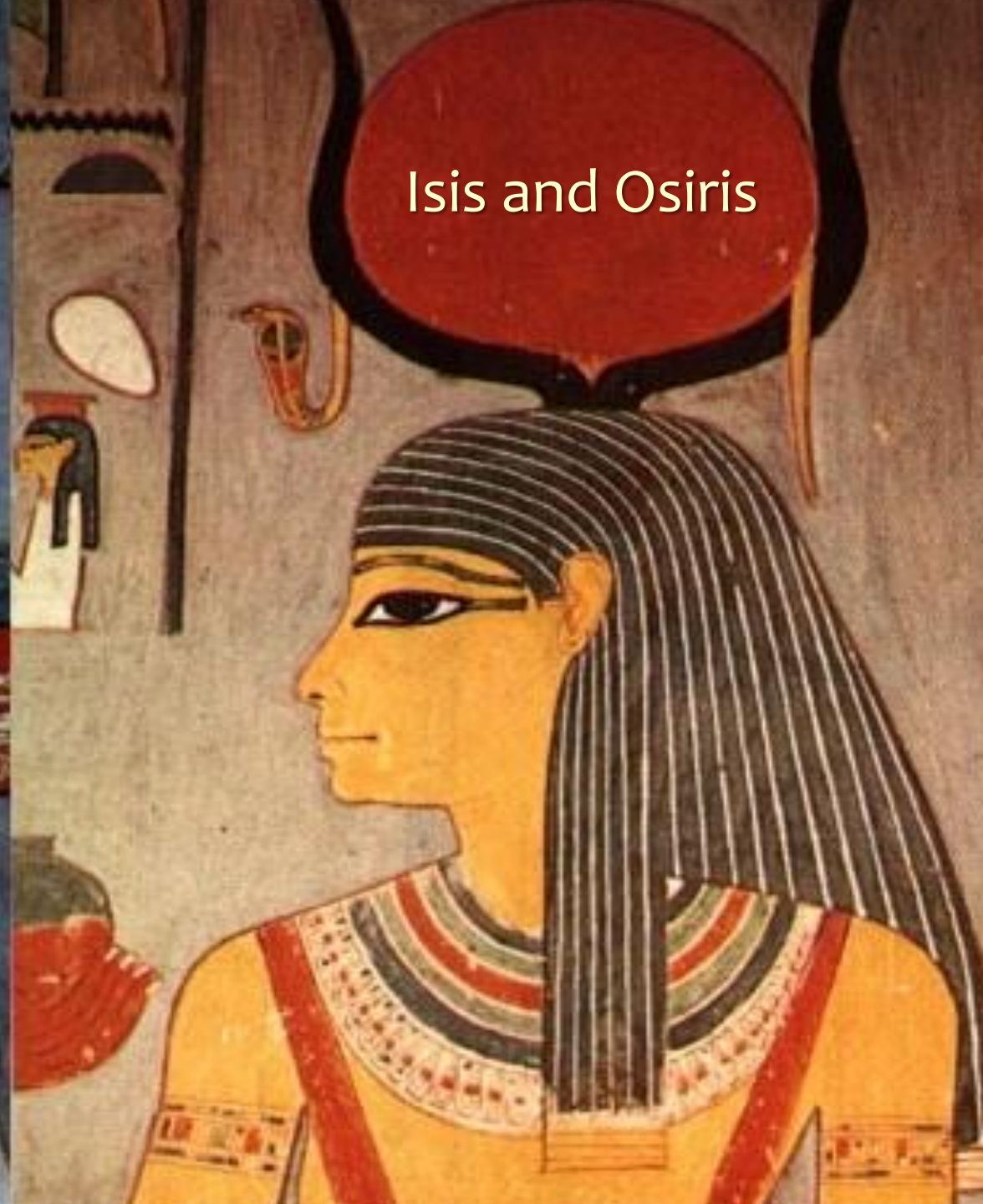


Volume 9 (1913)
The Scapegoat



The Dying God and the Murdered King

- Vital significance of agriculture
- Gods of vegetation and fertility (the 'corn [grain] god')



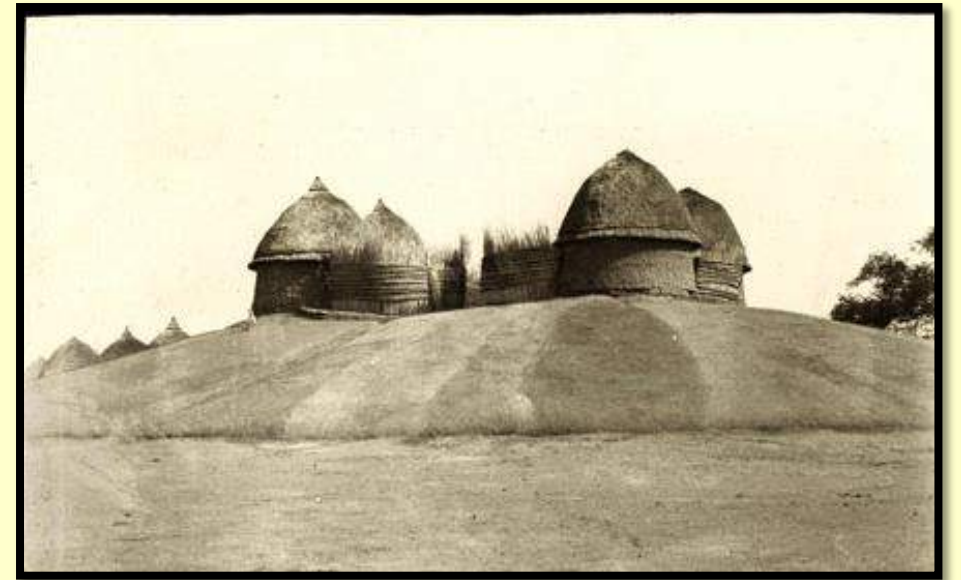
Isis and Osiris

The Dying God and the Murdered King

- Vital significance of agriculture
- Gods of vegetation and fertility (the 'corn [grain] god')
- Death and resurrection = cycle of life and the seasons
- Divine kings



The Shilluk Kingdom (southern Sudan), c. 1490-1865



The king's huts at Fashoda

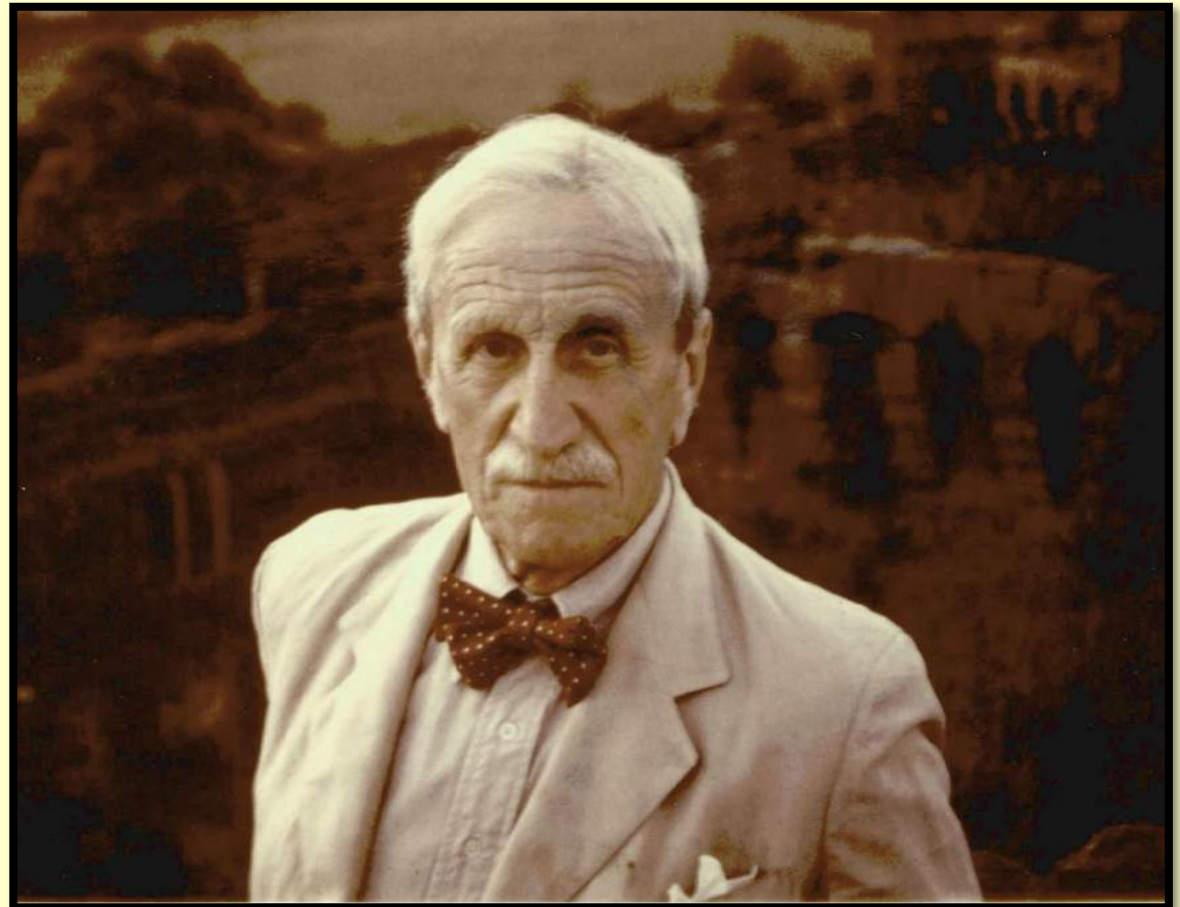
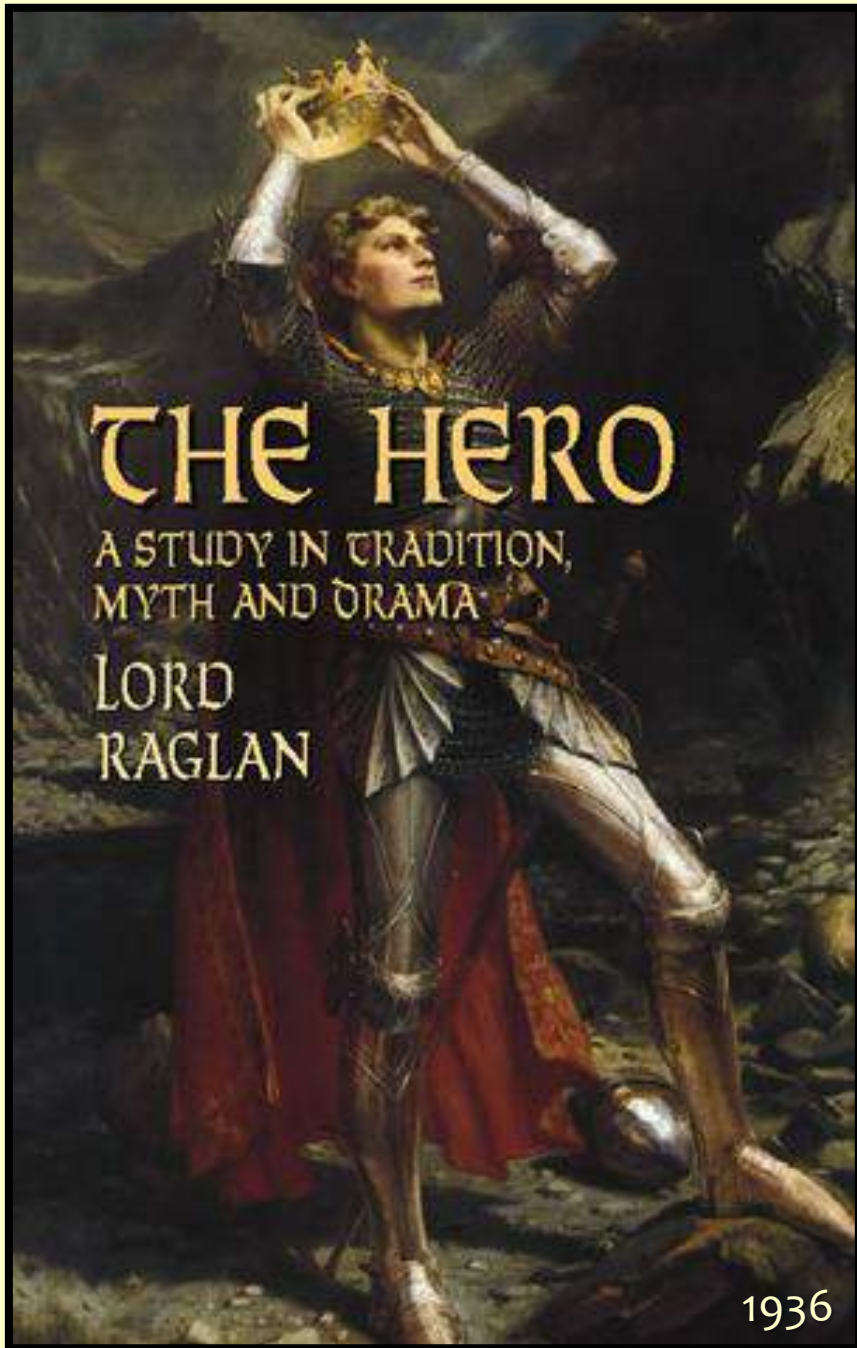
The Dying God and the Murdered King

- Vital significance of agriculture
- Gods of vegetation and fertility (the 'corn [grain] god')
- Death and resurrection = cycle of life and the seasons
- Divine kings
- Death of king = continued health of community
- Ritual and sympathetic magic

The Scapegoat

- Frazer identified scapegoat rituals in numerous societies
- Conflation of scapegoat ritual with killing the king (more powerful?)
- King's responsibility for well-being of community –
 - Through his death as the divine grain king
 - AND through the removal of communal woes (the scapegoat)

FitzRoy Richard Somerset,
4th Baron Raglan,
1885-1964



Lord Raglan

- Equation of the king with the hero of myth/legend
- Analysis of common elements of hero-tales
- Lord Raglan's predecessors –
 - J.G. von Hahn, 'The Aryan Expulsion and Return Formula', 1876
 - Otto Rank, *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero*, 1909
 - Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, 1928
- Hero-pattern often touted as Indo-European or Mediterranean, but South Asian examples exist

The Raglan Mythic Hero-Pattern

#	Characteristic	#	Characteristic
1	Mother is a royal virgin.	12	Marries princess.
2	Father is a king.	13	Becomes king.
3	Father often near relative of mother.	14	Reigns uneventfully for a time.
4	Unusual conception.	15	Prescribes laws.
5	Hero reputed to be son of god.	16	Later loses favour with gods/subjects.
6	Attempt to kill hero as infant.	17	Driven from throne and city.
7	Hero spirited away as child.	18	Meets with mysterious death.
8	Reared by foster parents in far country.	19	Often at top of a hill.
9	No details of childhood.	20	Children, if any, do not succeed him.
10	Returns or goes to future kingdom.	21	His body is not buried.
11	Victor over king, giant, monster, beast.	22	Has one or more holy sepulchres/tombs.

Who gets the most points on the Raglan Scale?

Points	Hero	Points	Hero
21	Oedipus	15	Zeus
20	Theseus	15	Jason
20	Moses	14	Nyikang (Shilluk hero/god)
19	Dionysos	13	Pelops
19	Arthur	13	Robin Hood
18	Romulus	12	Asklepios
18	Perseus	12	Joseph
18	Watu Gunung (Indonesian hero)	11	Apollo
17	Hercules	11	Sigurd/Siegfried
17	Llew Llawgyffes (Celtic hero)	9	Elijah
16	Bellerophon	7	Alexander the Great

The Core of the Hero Story?

- Rank – the birth story very significant
- Rank and Propp emphasized the hero's triumph –
 - Establishment of rightful place and rank
 - Victory over foes
 - Marriage to (usually) princess

‘And they lived happily ever after...’



The Core of the Hero Story?

- Rank – the birth story very significant
- Rank and Propp emphasized the hero's triumph –
 - Establishment of rightful place and rank
 - Victory over foes
 - Marriage to (usually) princess
- For Raglan, greater meaning in pursuing story to its end – the death of the hero is oxymoronically vital

So far, who is missing from this picture?

- Jesus and the hero-tale

Who gets the most points on the Raglan Scale?

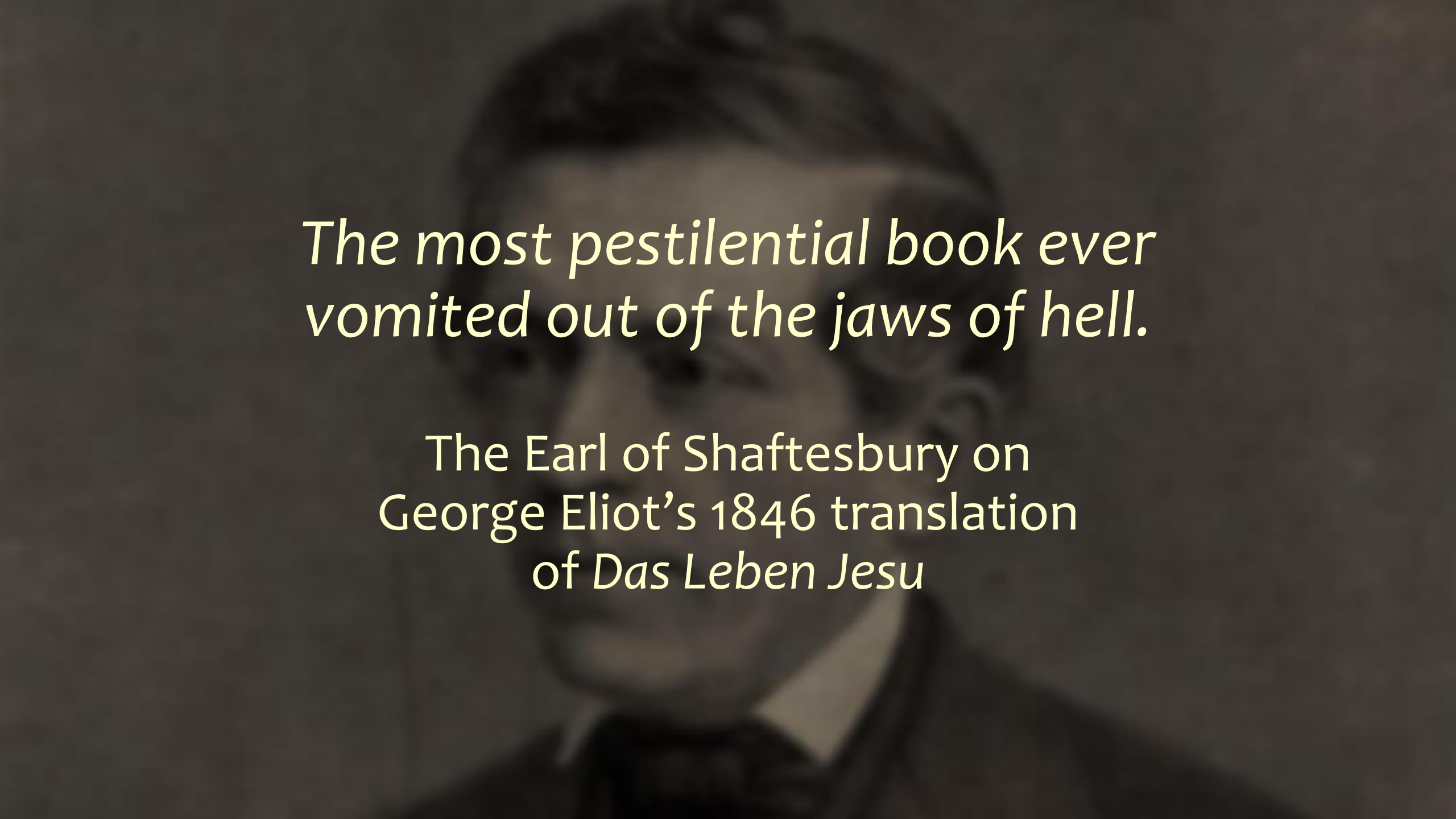
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20	Moses	Jesus: 17	Nyikang (Shilluk hero/god)
19	Dionysos		Pelops
19	Arthur		Robin Hood
18	Romulus	12	Asklepios
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17	Hercules	11	Sigurd/Siegfried
17	Llew Llawgyffes (Celtic hero)	9	Elijah
16	Bellerophon	7	Alexander the Great

So far, who is missing from this picture?

- Jesus and the hero-tale
- David Friedrich Strauss, *Das Leben Jesu* (1835)

David Friedrich Strauss,
1808-1874





*The most pestilential book ever
vomited out of the jaws of hell.*

The Earl of Shaftesbury on
George Eliot's 1846 translation
of *Das Leben Jesu*

So far, who is missing from this picture?

- Jesus and the hero-tale
- David Friedrich Strauss, *Das Leben Jesu* (1835)
- Frazer and the inconsistency of *The Golden Bough* editions
- Lord Raglan

In 1958 Lord Raglan told Professor Albert B. Friedman that of course he had thought of Jesus in connection with the hero pattern, but that he had no wish to risk upsetting anyone and therefore he elected to avoid even so much as mentioning the issue.

Alan Dundes, The Hero Pattern and the Life of Jesus

The early Christians were less timid:

And when we say also that Jesus Christ was produced without sexual union, and that he was crucified and died, and rose again, and ascended into heaven, we propound nothing different from what you believe regarding those whom you esteem sons of Jupiter. For you know how many sons your esteemed writers ascribed to Jupiter...

...Mercury, the interpreting word and teacher of all; Asclepius, who, though he was a great physician, was struck by a thunderbolt, and so ascended to heaven; and Bacchus [Dionysos] too, after he had been torn limb from limb; and Hercules, when he had committed himself to the flames to escape his toils; and Perseus, son of Danaë; and Bellerophon, who, though sprung from mortals, rose to heaven on the horse Pegasus.

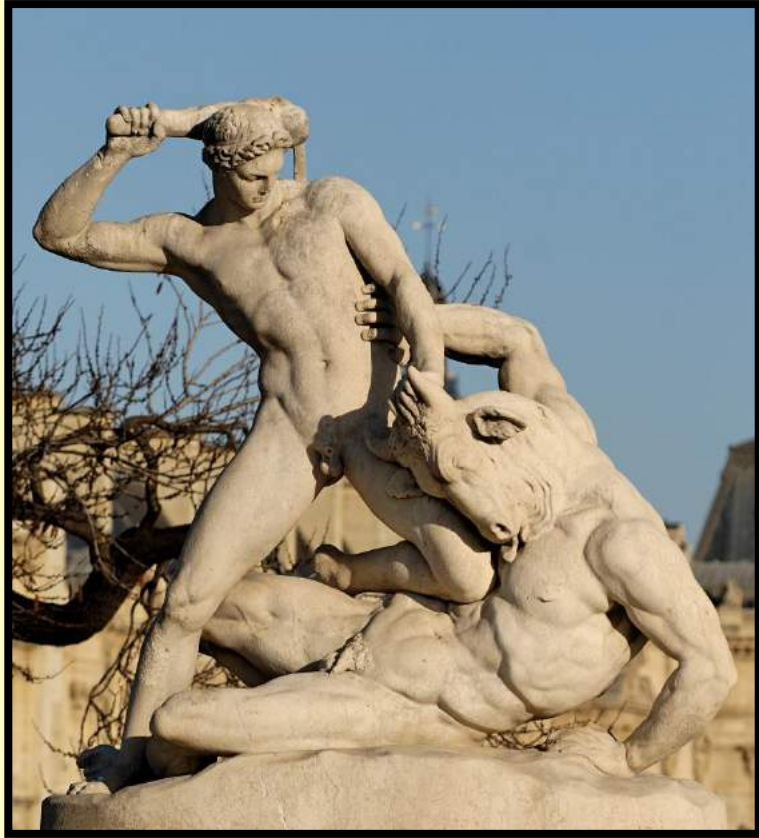
Justin Martyr, The First Apology
2nd century AD

So far, who is missing from this picture?

- Jesus and the hero-tale
- David Friedrich Strauss, *Das Leben Jesu* (1835)
- Frazer and the inconsistency of *The Golden Bough* editions
- Lord Raglan
- Alan Dundes points out that recognizing elements of the life of Jesus as mythic does not necessitate rejection of Jesus as a historical and/or religious individual

A Synoptic Look at the Hero's Life

Theseus



Theseus Fighting the Minotaur
Jean-Etienne Ramey
1826

Oedipus



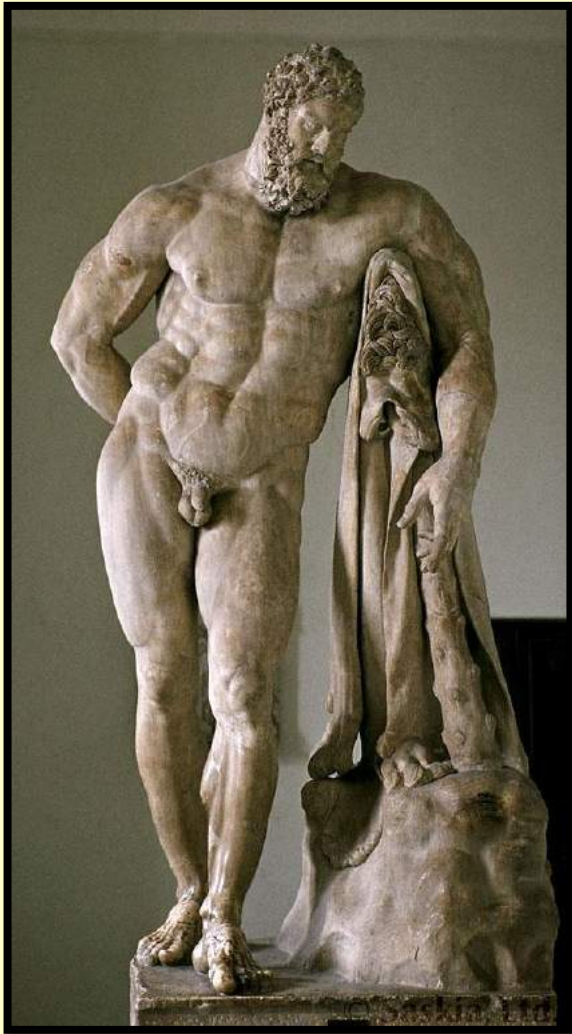
Oedipus and the Sphinx
Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres
1808

Perseus



Perseus with the Head of Medusa
Benvenuto Cellini, 1554

Hercules



Roman statue known
as the 'Farnese Hercules'

Dionysos



Bacchus
Caravaggio, c. 1595

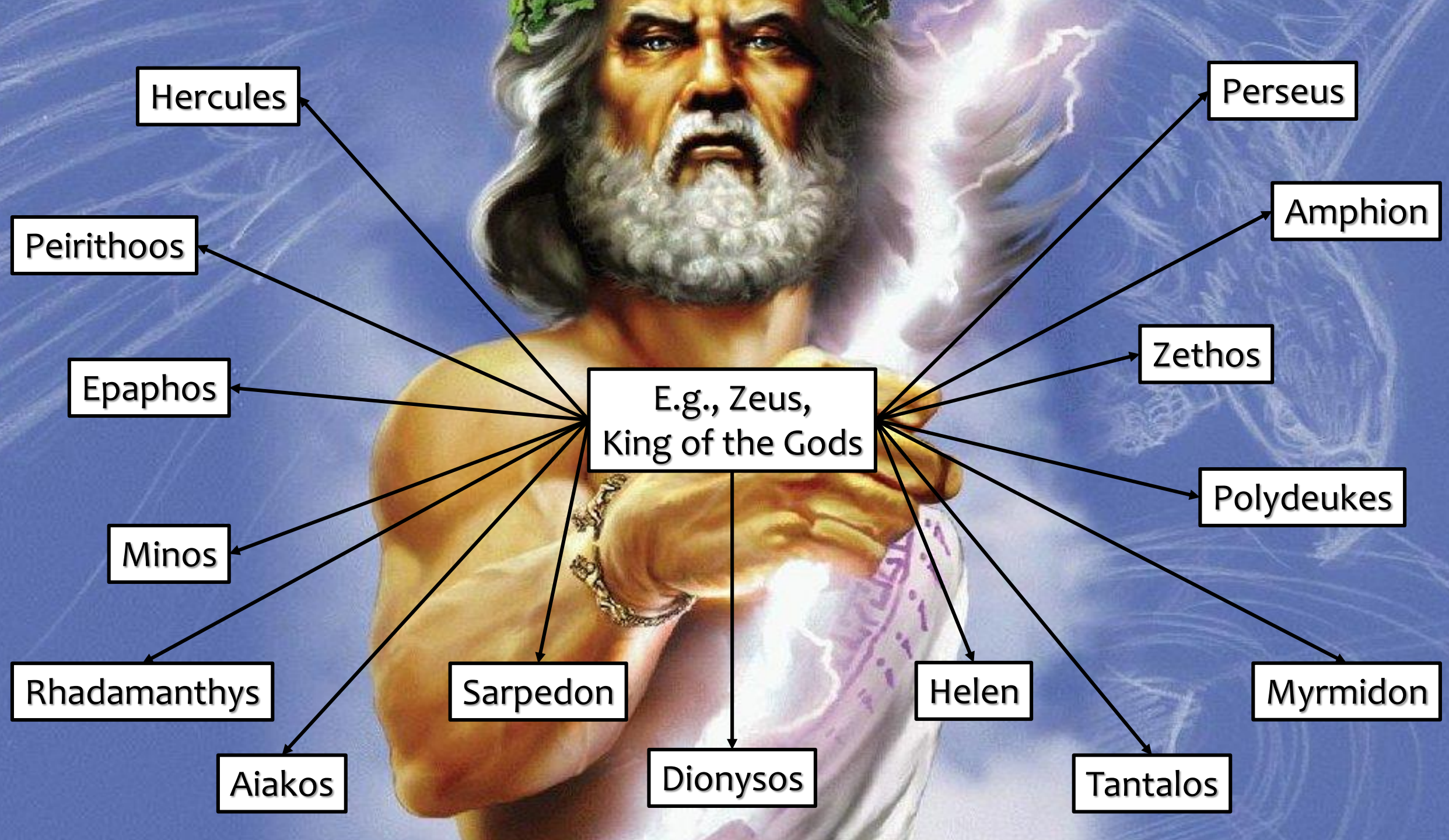
Asklepios



Statue of Asklepios

A Hero's Life

- Conception, birth, and infancy –
 - Royalty – but cf. folktales around characters such as Aladdin
 - Divine parent (or rumours of such)



A Hero's Life

- Conception, birth, and infancy –
 - Royalty
 - Divine parent
 - Virgin mother –
 - In Greek myth (e.g.): Aithra (mother of Theseus), Danaë (mother of Perseus), Alkmene (wife of Amphitryon and mother of Hercules)
 - Mary, mother of Jesus

But the angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and you will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High.’

‘How will this be,’ Mary asked the angel, ‘since I am a virgin?’

The angel answered, ‘The Holy Spirit (πνεῦμα ἅγιον) will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.’

Luke 1:34

A Hero's Life

- Conception, birth, and infancy –
 - Royalty
 - Divine parent
 - Virgin mother
 - Unusual or miraculous conception



The Death of Semele
Peter Paul Rubens
17th century



Attic Red-Figure vase showing
birth of Dionysos from
Zeus's thigh

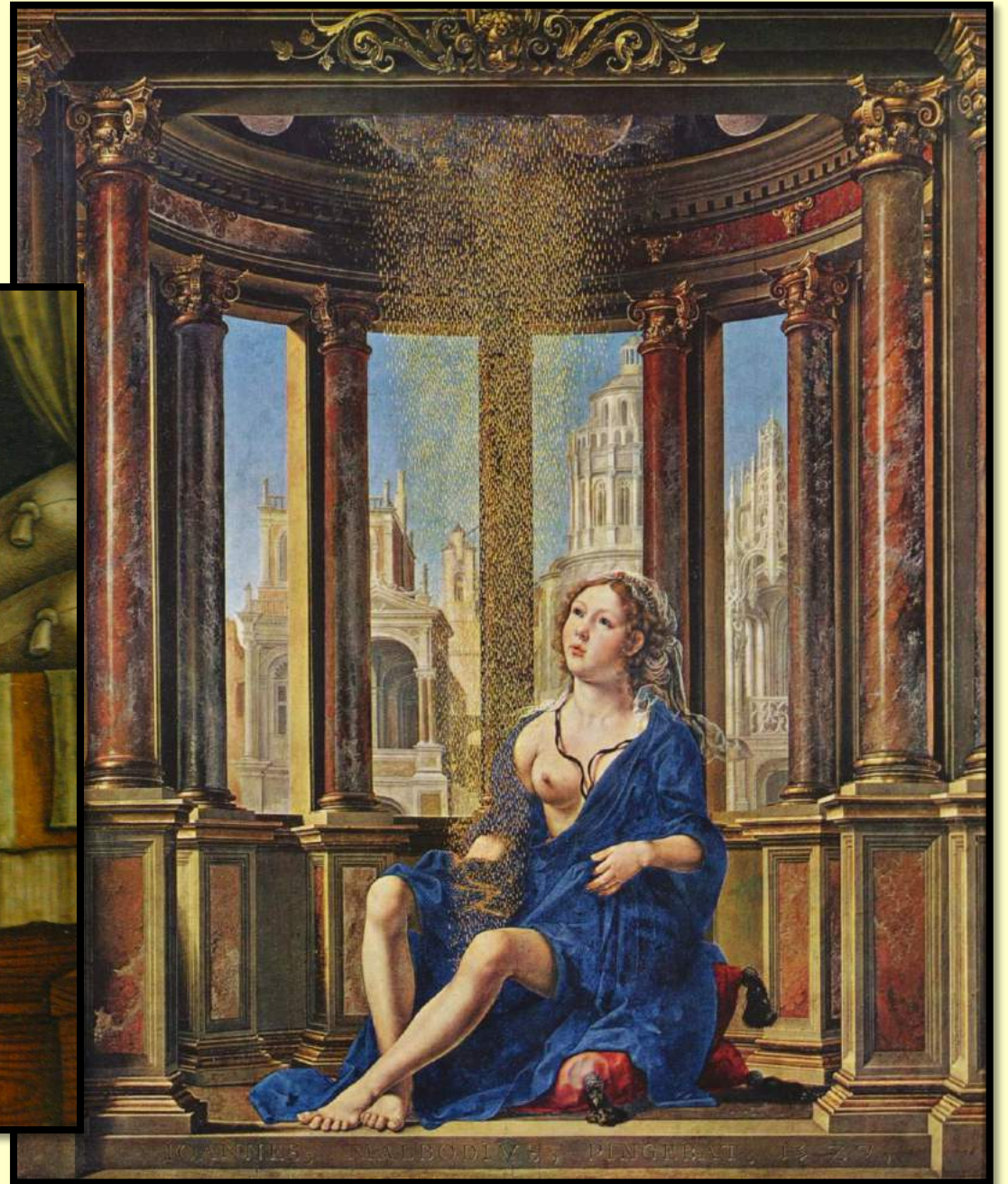
Danaë
Gustav Klimt
1907



The Virgin Annunciate
Carlo Crivelli
1482



Danaë in her Tower
Jan Gossaert
1527





The Annunciation
Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, 1725



Jupiter and Danaë
Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, c. 1736

A Hero's Life

- Conception, birth, and infancy –
 - Royalty
 - Divine parent
 - Virgin mother
 - Unusual or miraculous conception
 - Illegitimacy (and sometimes incest) –
 - Of Raglan's heroes (including Jesus) only 5 or 6 are 'legitimate'
 - And of the same group, between 6 and 9 are born of incest

A Hero's Life

- Conception, birth, and infancy –
 - Royalty
 - Divine parent
 - Virgin mother
 - Unusual or miraculous conception
 - Illegitimacy
 - Early dangers –
 - The significance of prophecy (which Raglan does not isolate as a distinct element)
 - Exposure, commitment to water
 - Succour of animals or humble people

This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said ‘Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.’

Matthew 1: 18-21

Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: 'This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.'

Simeon's prophecy to Mary
Luke 2: 34-35



Oedipus, son of Laios and Jocasta of Thebes

Phorbas and Oedipus,
after Antoine-Denis Chaudet, 1801

Perseus,
son of Zeus and Danaë

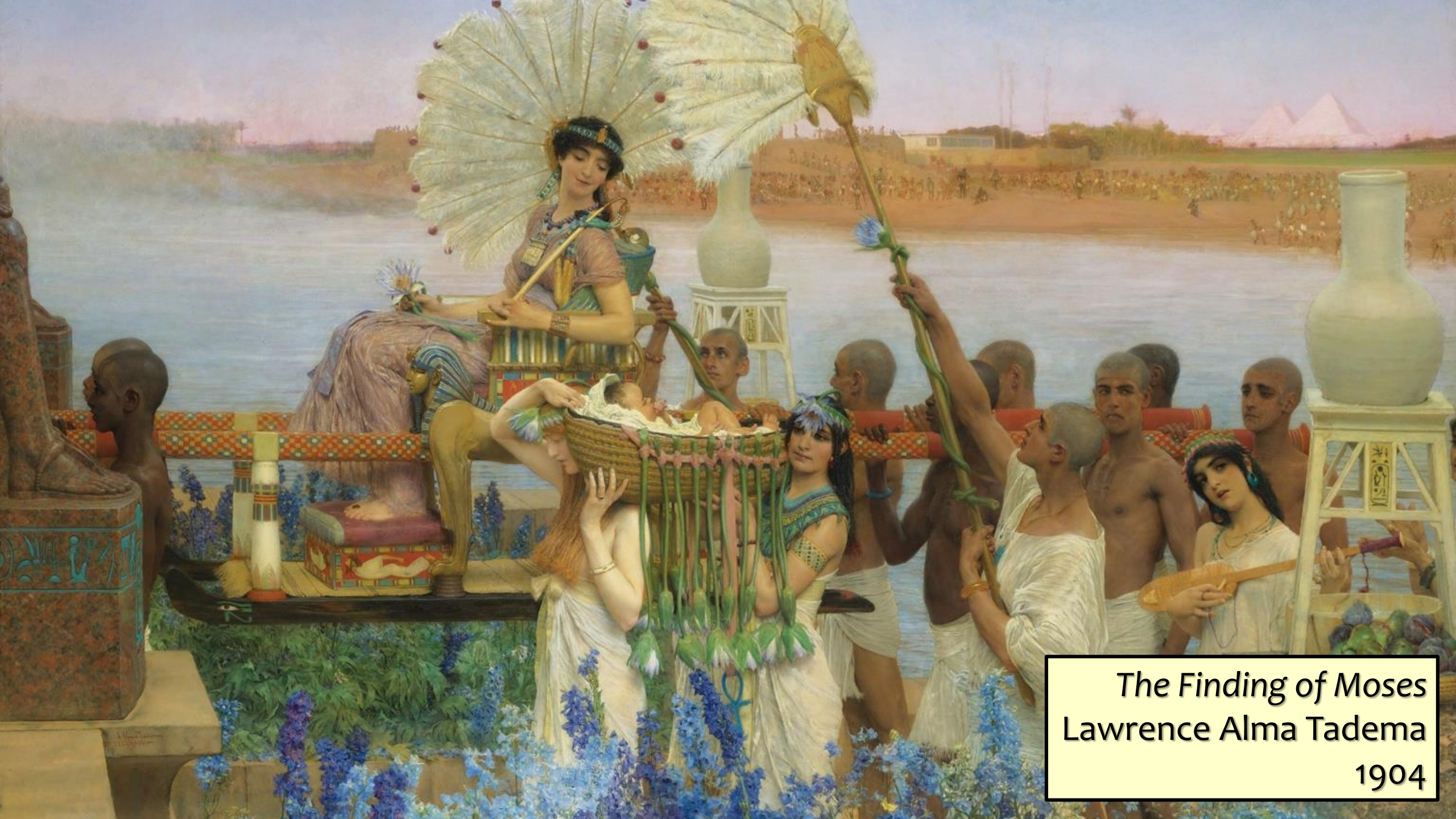


Danaë, after
J.W. Waterhouse,
1892

Hercules, son of Zeus and Alkmene

Infant Hercules strangling snakes,
Roman, 2nd century AD





The Finding of Moses
Lawrence Alma Tadema
1904

*An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream.
‘Get up,’ he said, ‘take the child and his mother and
escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is
going to search for the child to kill him.’*

Matthew 2: 13



The Flight into Egypt
Giotto di Bondoni
1304-1306

The Massacre of the Innocents
Peter Paul Rubens
1611-1612

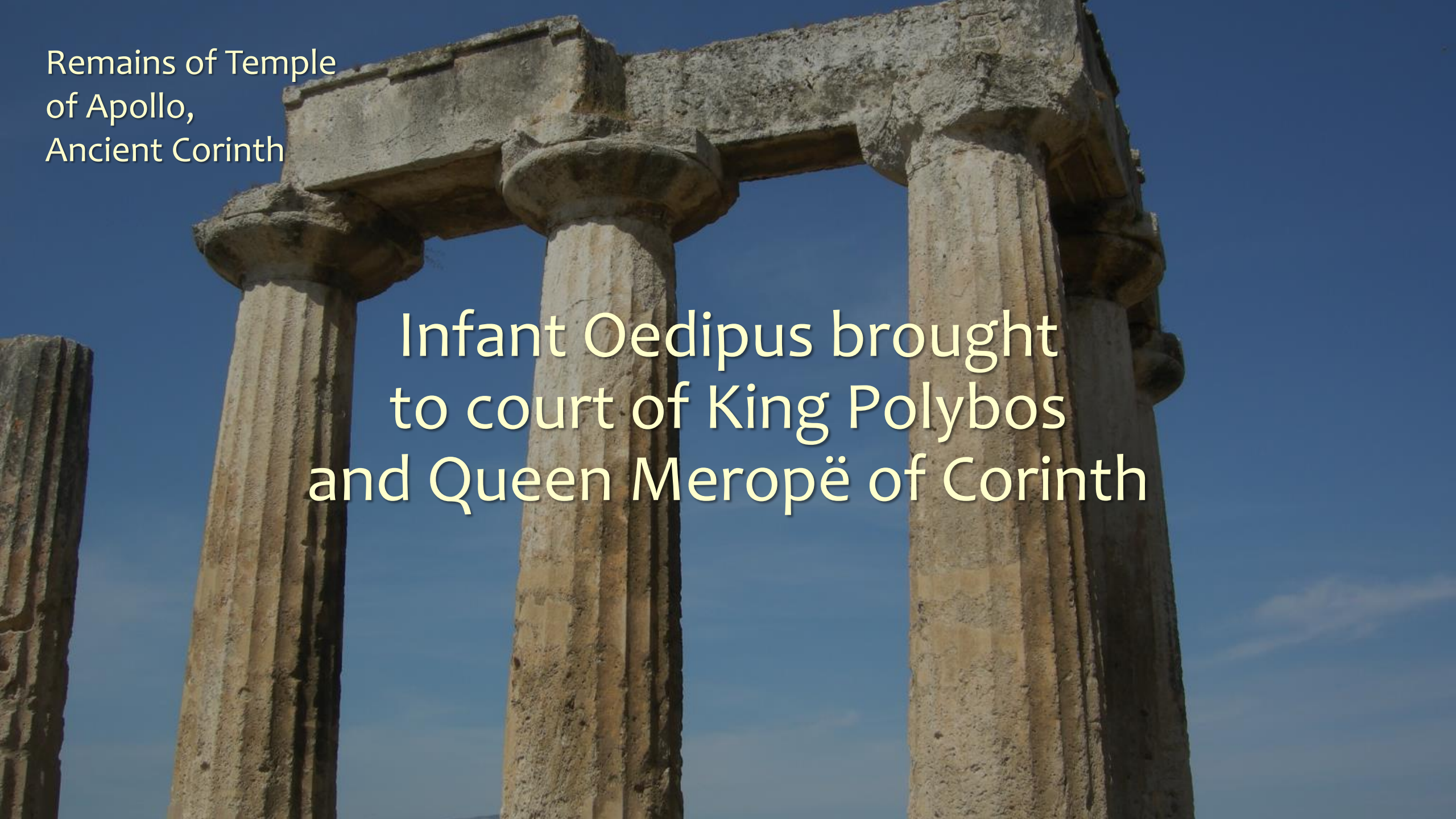


A Hero's Life

- Conception, birth, and infancy –
 - Royalty
 - Divine parent
 - Virgin mother
 - Unusual or miraculous conception
 - Illegitimacy
 - Early dangers
 - Child brought up far from home and/or true parent(s)

Apollo Entrusts His Son Asklepios to the Centaur Chiron
Christopher Unterberger
18th century



A photograph of the ruins of the Temple of Apollo in Ancient Corinth, featuring several tall, fluted stone columns and a section of the entablature against a clear blue sky.

Remains of Temple
of Apollo,
Ancient Corinth

Infant Oedipus brought
to court of King Polybos
and Queen Meropë of Corinth

A Hero's Life

- Conception, birth, and infancy
- Childhood –
 - Little is known, but sometimes the hero's true nature is revealed

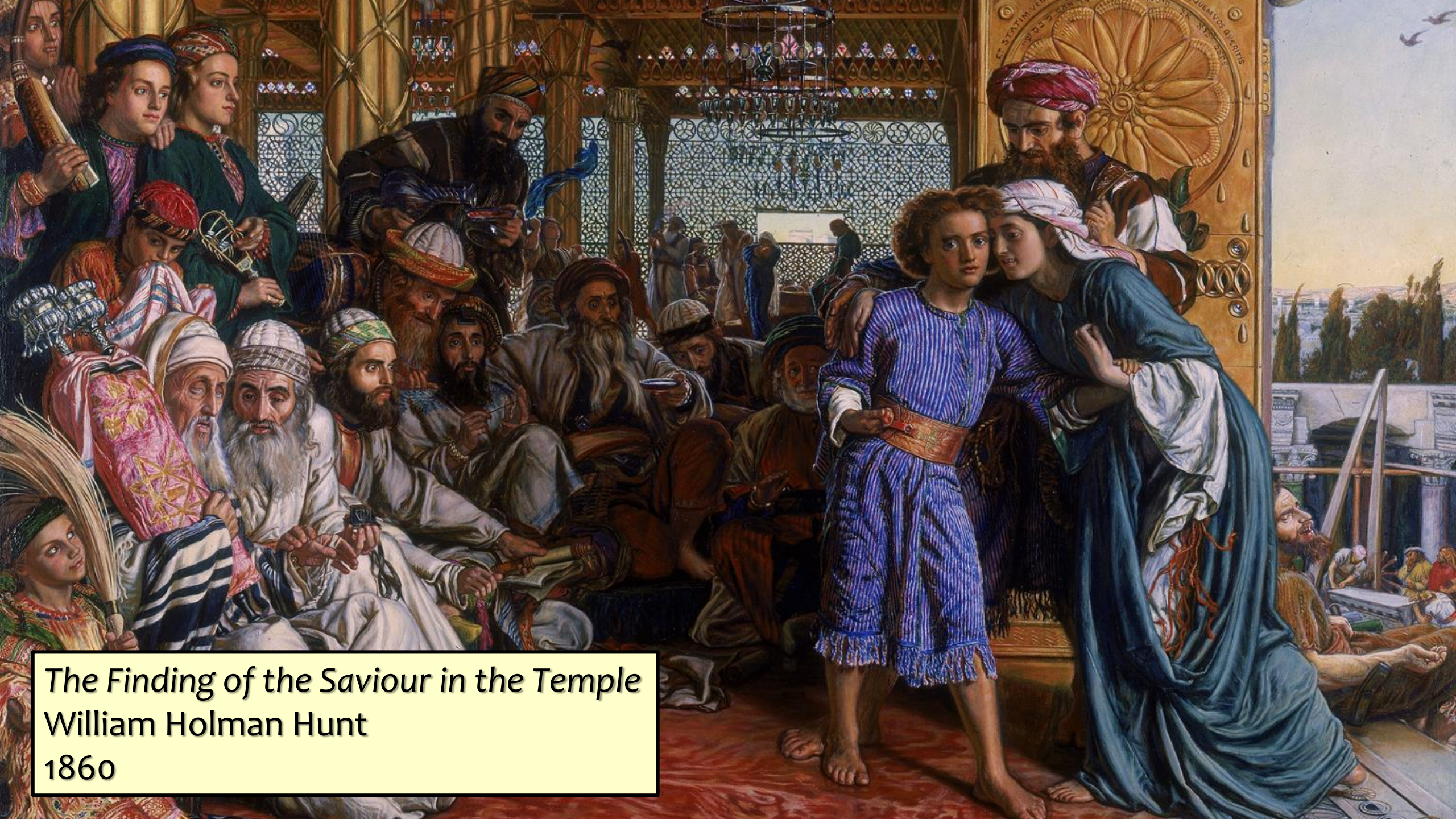
Cyrus the Great of Persia (6th c. BC)



The Tomb of Cyrus the Great
at Pasargadai (Fars province, Iran)

When the boy was ten years old, his identity was revealed in the way I will now relate. He and some other boys were playing the game of 'Kings' in the street of the village, where Mitrادات kept his oxen, and it so happened that Cyrus – the supposed son of the herdsman – was the one whom the boys picked as their king...

Herodotos 1.114



The Finding of the Saviour in the Temple
William Holman Hunt
1860

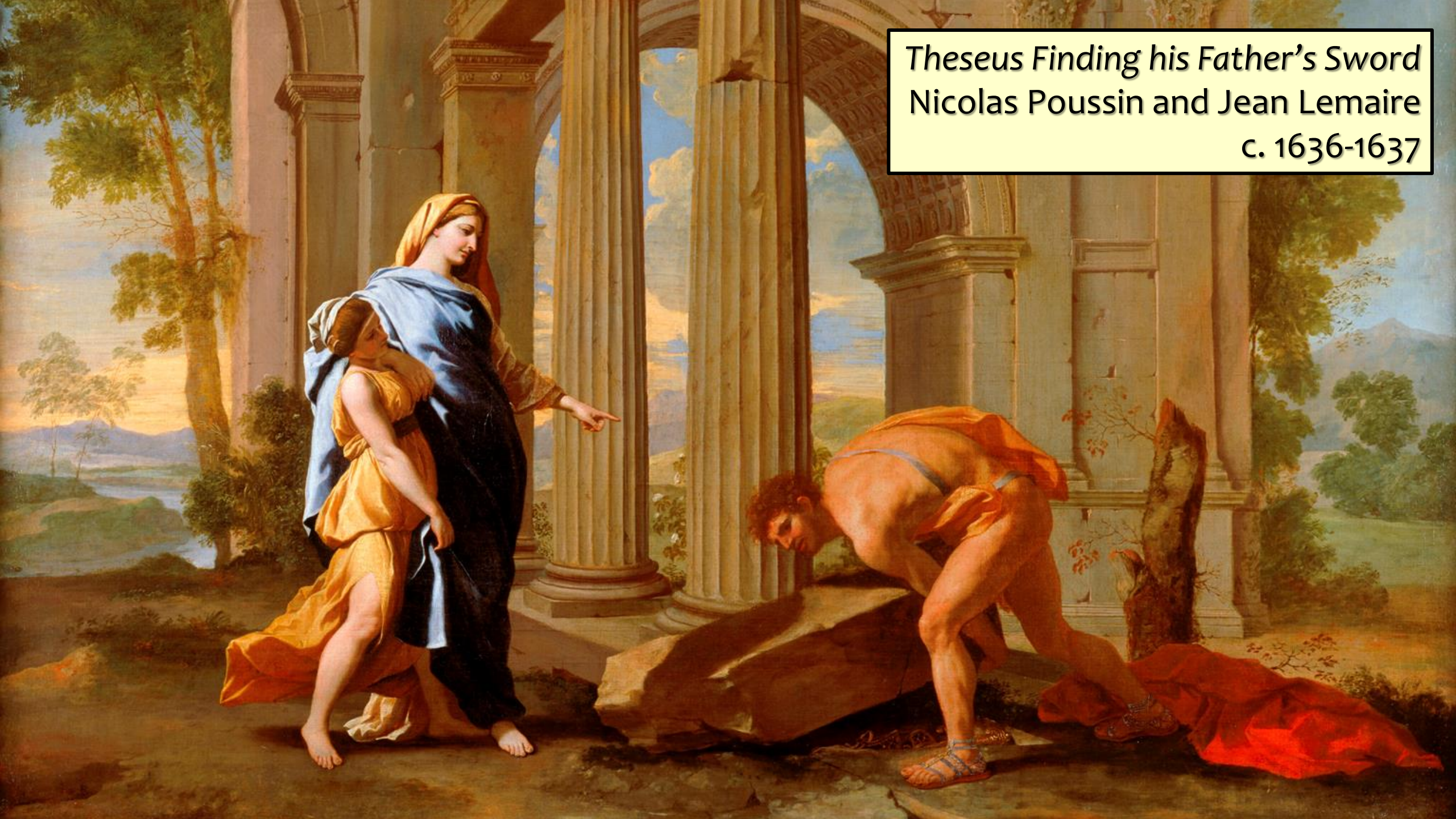
After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, 'Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you.' 'Why were you searching for me?' he asked. 'Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?' But they did not understand what he was saying to them.

Luke 2: 46-50

A Hero's Life

- Conception, birth, and infancy
- Childhood
- Young manhood – self-discovery and revelation to others

Theseus Finding his Father's Sword
Nicolas Poussin and Jean Lemaire
c. 1636-1637



The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, ‘Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!’

John 1: 29



The Baptism of Christ
Joachim Patinir
1515

At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. As Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: 'You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.'

Mark 1: 9-11

A Hero's Life

- Conception, birth, and infancy
- Childhood
- Young manhood – self-discovery and revelation to others
 - The journey



The Temple of Apollo,
seat of the oracle at Delphi





Dionysos in India

J.P. Munro

2012

*After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee,
proclaiming the good news of God.*

*After sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick
and demon-possessed. The whole town gathered at
the door, and Jesus healed many who had serious
diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he
would not let the demons speak because they knew
who he was.*

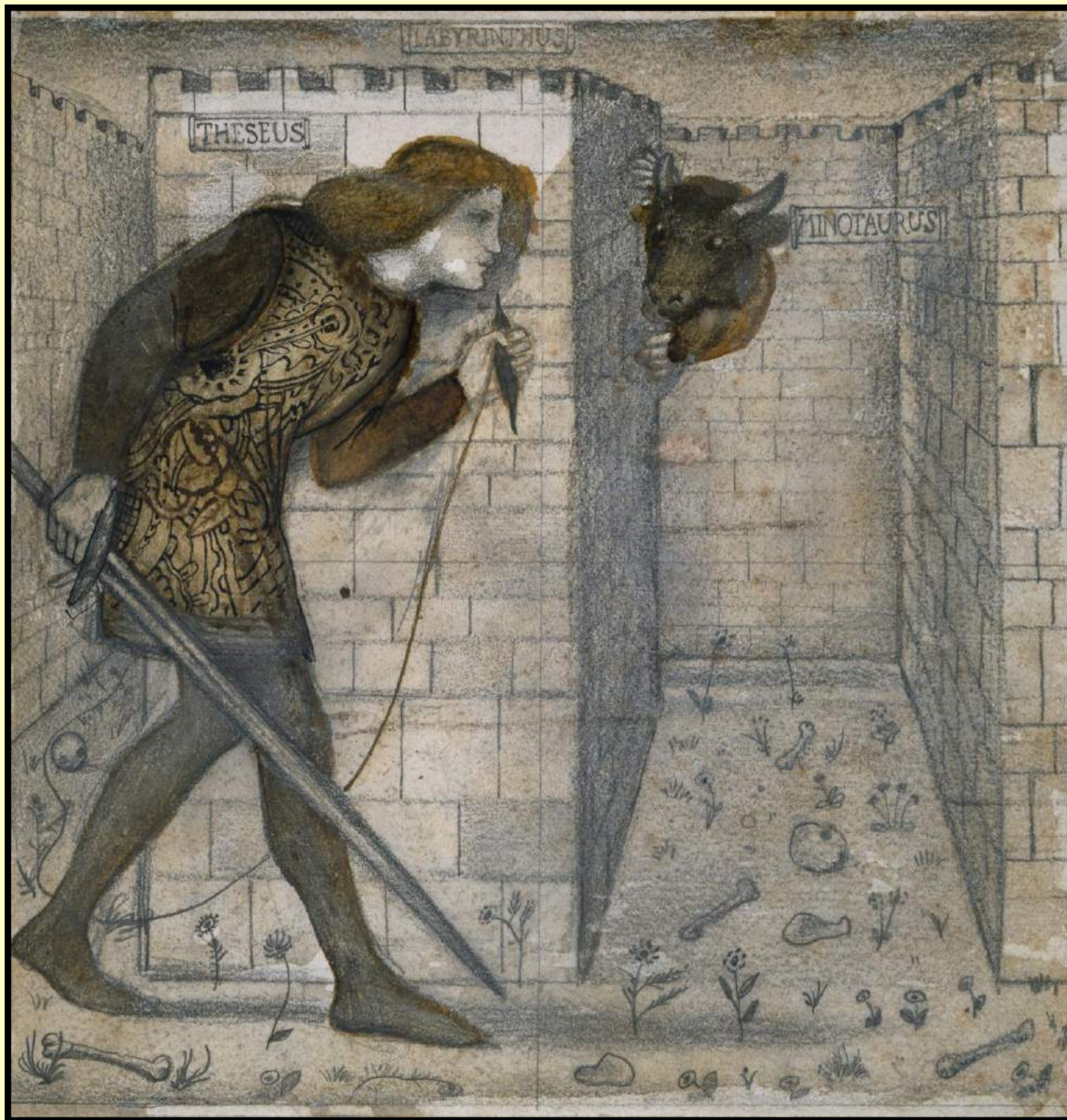
Mark 1: 14; 1: 32-34

A Hero's Life

- Conception, birth, and infancy
- Childhood
- Young manhood – self-discovery and revelation to others
 - The journey
 - The test and the quest

Perseus Slaying Medusa
Laurent-Honoré Marqueste
1876

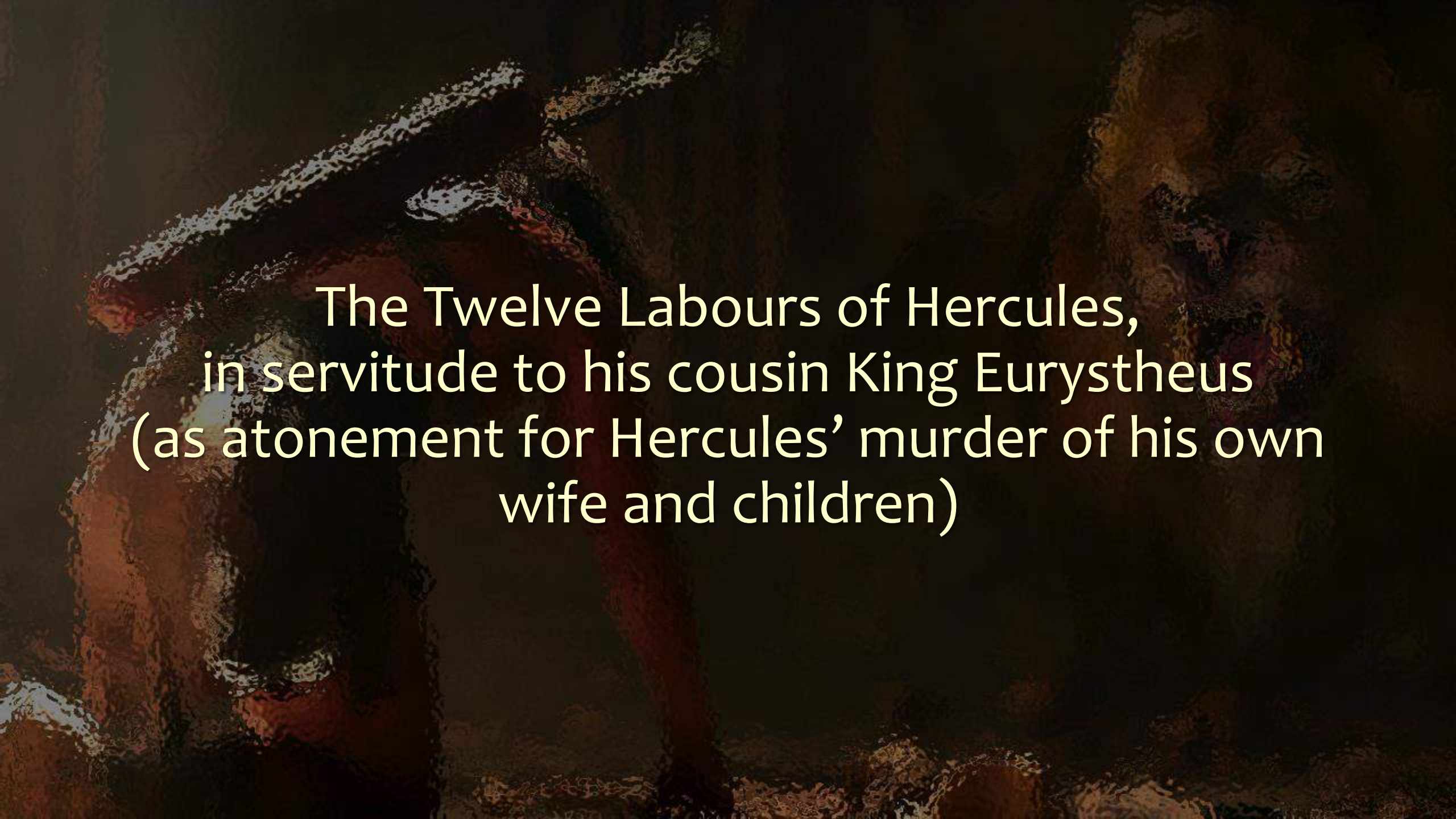




*Theseus and the Minotaur in the
Labyrinth*
Tile design by Edward Burne-Jones
1861

Hercules and the Nemean Lion





The Twelve Labours of Hercules,
in servitude to his cousin King Eurystheus
(as atonement for Hercules' murder of his own
wife and children)



The Lernaean Hydra

Cerberus

Eurystheus jumping
into a jar



Oedipus and the Sphinx
Gustave Moreau
1864



Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.

The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. 'If you are the Son of God,' he said, 'throw yourself down from here. For it is written, "He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone."' Jesus answered, 'It says, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test."'

Luke 4: 1-12

He was with the wild animals and angels attended him.

Mark 1: 13

Symbolic Dragonslaying?

Jesus and Asklepios both 'do battle' with sickness and death.

A Hero's Life

- Conception, birth, and infancy
- Childhood
- Young manhood – self-discovery and revelation to others
 - The journey
 - The test and the quest
 - The reckoning

Oedipus

- Leaves Delphi with a still limited self-awareness
- Aimlessly (?) wanders towards Thebes and has a small road rage encounter...

The Murder of Laïos by Oedipus
Paul Joseph Blanc
1867



Now, Jocasta, I will tell you all. Making my way toward this triple crossroad I began to see a herald, then a brace of colts drawing a wagon, and mounted on the bench . . . a man, just as you've described him, coming face-to-face, and the one in the lead and the old man himself were about to thrust me off the road – brute force – and the one shouldering me aside, the driver, I strike him in anger!

*And the old man, watching me come up along his wheels –
he brings down his prod, two prongs straight at my head! I
paid him back with interest! Short work, by god – with one
blow of the staff in this right hand I knock him out of his
high seat, roll him out of the wagon, sprawling headlong –
I killed them all – every mother's son!*

Sophocles, Oedipus Rex

The hostility and the ‘reckoning’ with the father avatar is a key component of the hero-tale that is missing from the life of Jesus – but note that Jesus’ death *is* in accordance with the plan of his father.

A Hero's Life

- Conception, birth, and infancy
- Childhood
- Young manhood – self-discovery and revelation to others
 - The journey
 - The test and the quest
 - The reckoning
 - The (once and) future kingdom

Oedipus

- Leaves Delphi with a still limited self-awareness
- Aimlessly (?) wanders towards Thebes and has a small road rage encounter
- Outwits/kills (?) the Sphinx
- Acclaimed as a saviour at Thebes – and offered the kingship

A Hero's Life

- Conception, birth, and infancy
- Childhood
- Young manhood – self-discovery and revelation to others
- The royal maiden –
 - The damsel in distress

Perseus and Andromeda
Frederic Leighton
1891



A Hero's Life

- Conception, birth, and infancy
- Childhood
- Young manhood – self-discovery and revelation to others
- The royal maiden –
 - The damsel in distress
 - The helper



Ariadne and Theseus
Niccolò Bambini
17th/18th century



Ariadne
John William Waterhouse
1898

A Hero's Life

- Conception, birth, and infancy
- Childhood
- Young manhood – self-discovery and revelation to others
- The royal maiden –
 - The damsel in distress
 - The helper
 - The key to the kingdom

Given that...

- (a) the royal maiden is often the daughter of the hero's adversary (e.g., Ariadne is the daughter of King Minos);
and
- (b) the hero's adversary is often his relative (e.g., Perseus is persecuted by his grandfather, Jason by his uncle); then
it follows that
- (c) the hero will often be related to the royal maiden, at
times a little too closely for comfort

Jocasta (Romi Dias) and
Oedipus (Joshua Torrez)
Oedipus el Rey, 2015





A blurred image of a prince and princess dancing in a ballroom. The prince is wearing a red cape and the princess is wearing a blue dress. They are in the center of the frame, with a crowd of people in the background. The text "This is where fairy-tales and sitcoms end." is overlaid on the image.

This is where fairy-tales and sitcoms end.

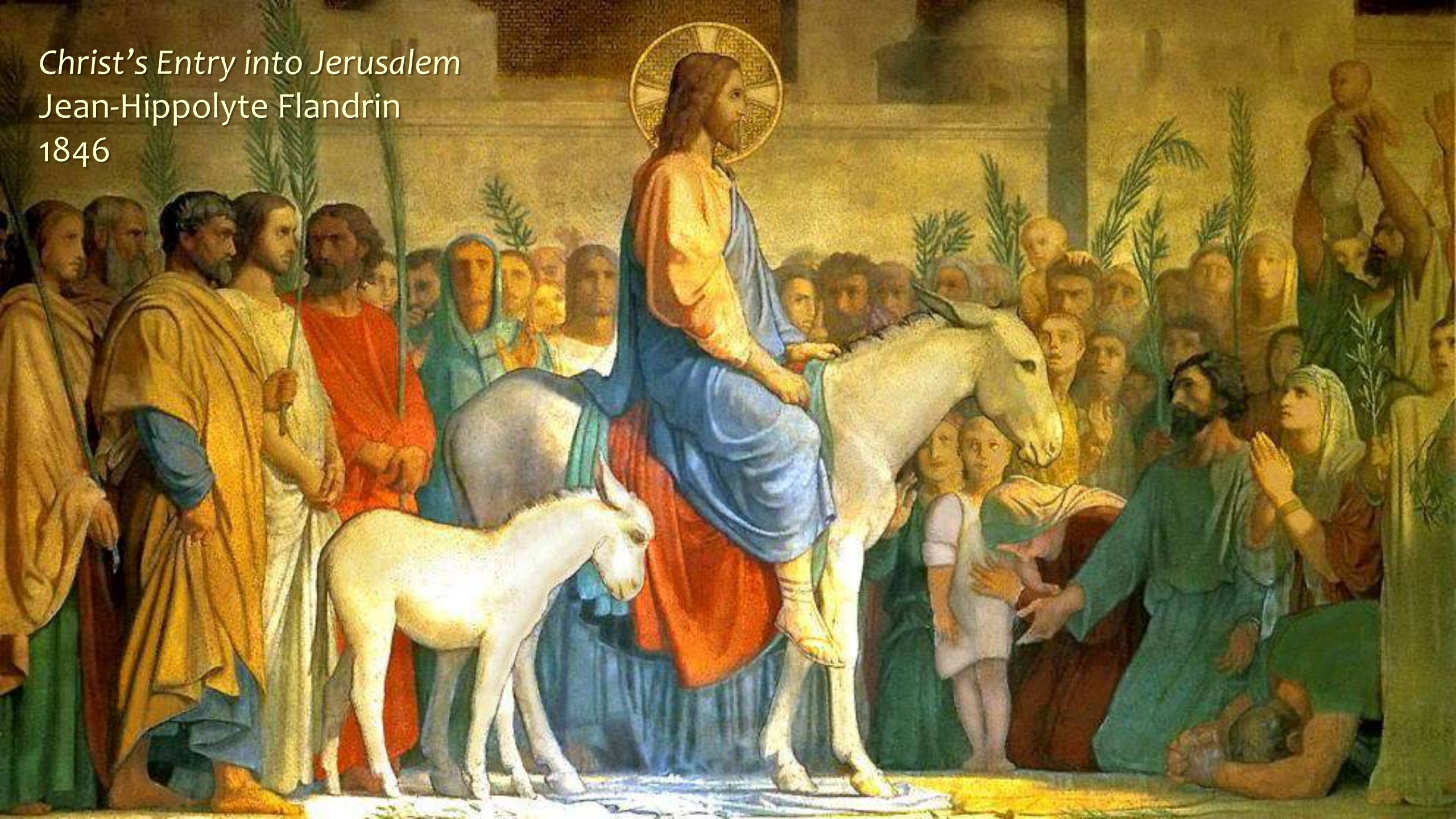
A Hero's Life

- Conception, birth, and infancy
- Childhood
- Young manhood
- The royal maiden
- Kingship
 - May prescribe laws, but otherwise generally uneventful

Elements of Kingship in the Story of Jesus

- Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem

Christ's Entry into Jerusalem
Jean-Hippolyte Flandrin
1846



This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet: 'Say to the Daughter of Zion, "See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey."' "

Matthew 21: 4-5

'Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and bearing salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'

Zechariah 9: 9

Elements of Kingship in the Story of Jesus

- Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem
- King of the Jews
 - The debate with Pilate

Christ Before Pilate
Mihály Munkácsy
1881





*So Pilate asked Jesus, 'Are you the king of the
Jews?'*

'Yes, it is as you say,' Jesus replied.

Matthew 27: 11; Mark 15: 2; Luke 23: 3

ישוע הנצרי ומלך היהודים

Ἰησοῦς ὁ Ναζωραῖος ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων

IESVS NAZARENVS REX IYDAEORVM

Elements of Kingship in the Story of Jesus

- Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem
- King of the Jews
- The crown (of thorns) and the purple robe



Christ With the Crown of Thorns

Dirck van Baburen

1623

And the soldiers led him away inside the palace; and they called together the whole battalion. And they clothed him in a purple cloak, and plaiting a crown of thorns they put it on him. And they began to salute him, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' And they struck his head with a reed, and spat upon him, and they knelt down in homage to him. And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the purple cloak, and put his own clothes on him. And they led him out to crucify him.

Mark 15: 16-20

Elements of Kingship in the Story of Jesus

- Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem
- King of the Jews
- The crown (of thorns) and the purple robe
- The Kingdom of Heaven

Pilate summoned Jesus and asked him, 'Are you
the king of the Jews?'

Jesus said, 'My kingdom is not of this world. If it
were, my servants would fight to prevent my
arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from
another place.'

'You are a king, then!' said Pilate.

John 19: 33-36

A Hero's Life

- Conception, birth, and infancy
- Childhood
- Young manhood
- The royal maiden
- Kingship
- Fall, death, and disappearance

Oedipus (Douglas Campbell) in
Stratford's 1955 production of
Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*



A Hero's Life

- Conception, birth, and infancy
- Childhood
- Young manhood
- The royal maiden
- Kingship
- Fall, death, and disappearance
 - Often through betrayal

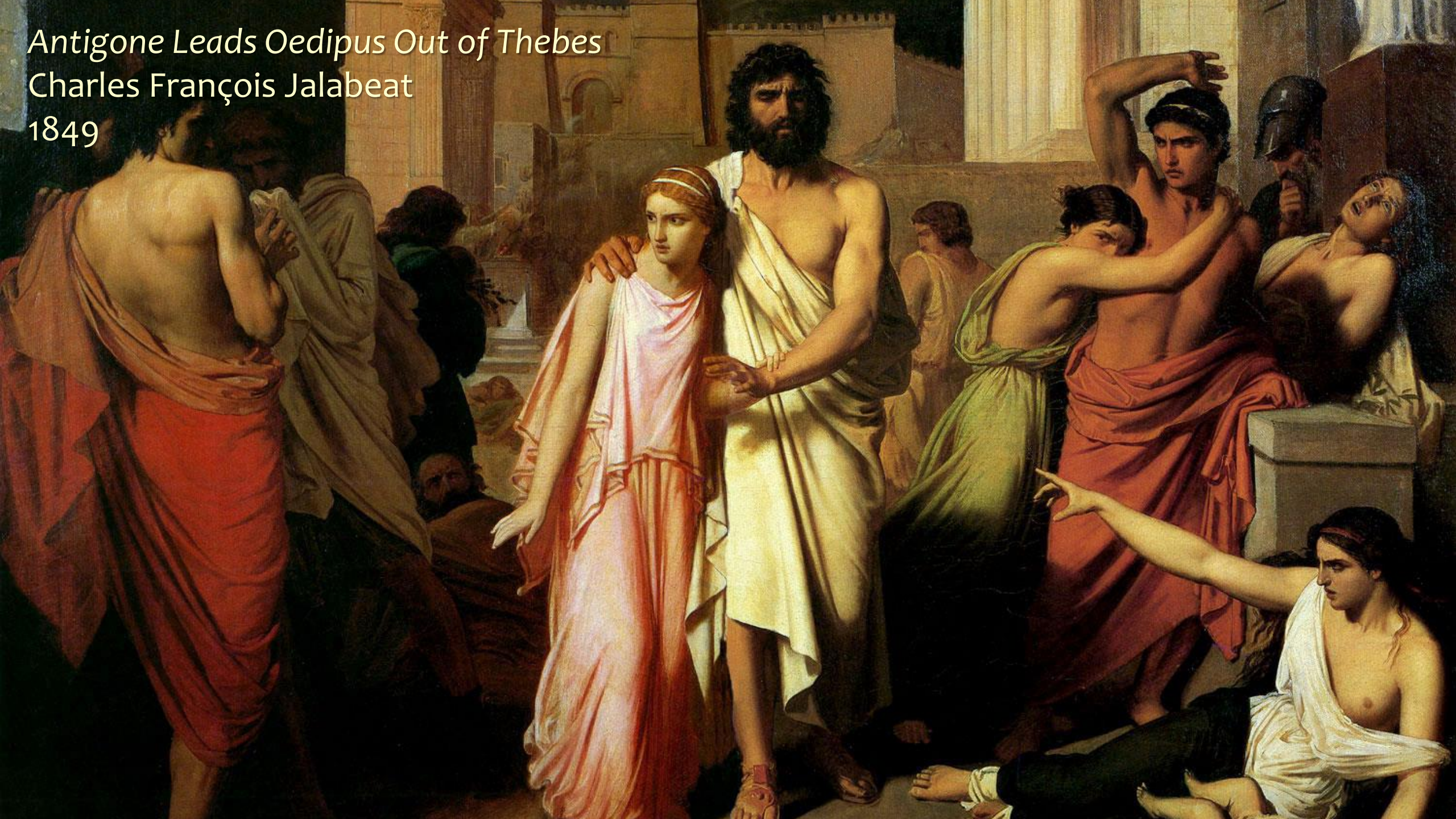
Theseus, Phaedra, and Hippolytos
German School
18th century





Judas' Betrayal and the Arrest of Jesus
Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi

Antigone Leads Oedipus Out of Thebes
Charles François Jalabéat
1849





The Death of Hercules

Bernard Picart

1731

*Resurrection of Christ and
Women at the Tomb*
Fra Angelico
1442



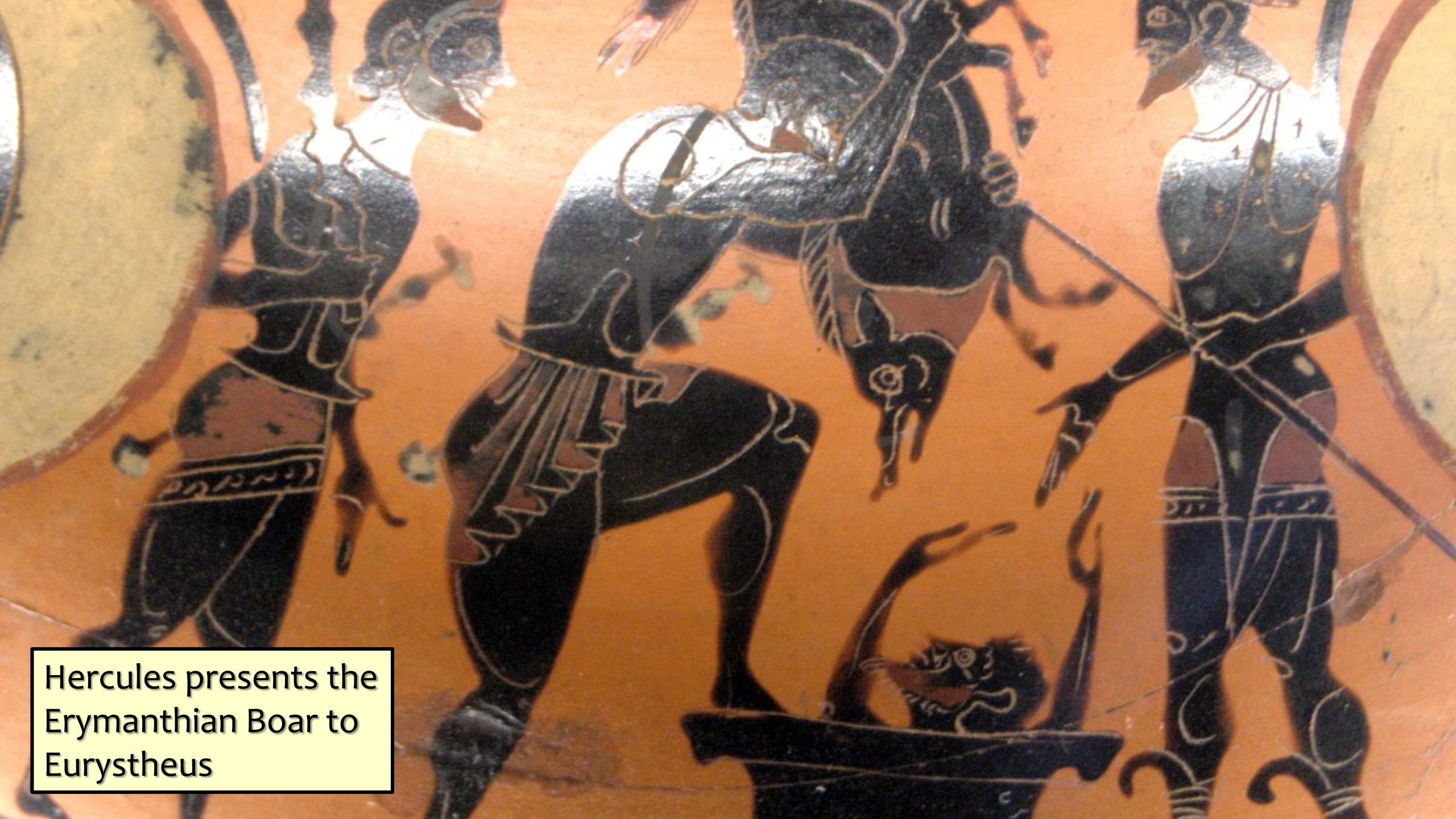
Scapegoats and Saviours

If scapegoats are the 'other', what are heroes?

- Heroes too are 'other'
- The isolation of heroes and kings, who have no peers
- The hero-pattern –
 - Unusual conception and illegitimacy
 - Loss of birth home and family = loss of identity
 - 'Impossible' tasks
 - Unable to establish dynasty
- Heroes are thus 'singularities'

The Purposes of Mythic Heroes

- Self-realization and self-aggrandizement, absolutely
- By itself, this is not enough...



Hercules presents the
Erymanthian Boar to
Eurystheus

The Purposes of Mythic Heroes

- Self-realization and self-aggrandizement, absolutely
- By itself, this is not enough
- Heroes are *saviours* –
 - Hercules' Labours make the world safe for humanity
 - Perseus rescues the innocent Andromeda
 - Theseus frees the Athenians from their tribute to Minos of Crete
- And heroes can continue this function after death

Besides several other circumstances that moved the Athenians to honour Theseus as a demigod (ἥρως, herōs), in the battle which was fought at Marathon against the Persians [490 BCE], many of the soldiers believed they saw an apparition of Theseus in arms, rushing on at the head of them against the barbarians.

Plutarch, Life of Theseus

Levels of Salvation

- Beasts and monsters and villains and things that go bump in the night
 - Perseus, Theseus, Hercules, Oedipus, ...

Or Dwayne Johnson AS Hercules (2014)...



Or , well, just Dwayne Johnson ...
(*San Andreas*, 2015)



Levels of Salvation

- Beasts and monsters and villains and things that go bump in the night
 - Perseus, Theseus, Hercules, Oedipus, ...
 - Symbolizing...?

Levels of Salvation

- Beasts and monsters and villains and things that go bump in the night
- Disease, sorrow, and the hardship of human life
 - We have found a scapegoat for the origins of these things (Eve, Pandora)
 - Now we need someone to save us from them
 - Asklepios, Jesus

Levels of Salvation

- Beasts and monsters and villains and things that go bump in the night
- Disease, sorrow, and the hardship of human life
- Spiritual salvation
 - Jesus
 - But also Dionysos and other 'Frazer-ian' dying gods

From Saviour to Scapegoat

- Not all Greek heroes were scapegoats (well, Oedipus...)
- Rather, the hero-pattern provides elements that are compatible with a different concept –
 - The *positive* scapegoat, the strong one, the willing sacrifice, the ‘suffering servant’
 - Though the marginalization and criminalization motif is still present

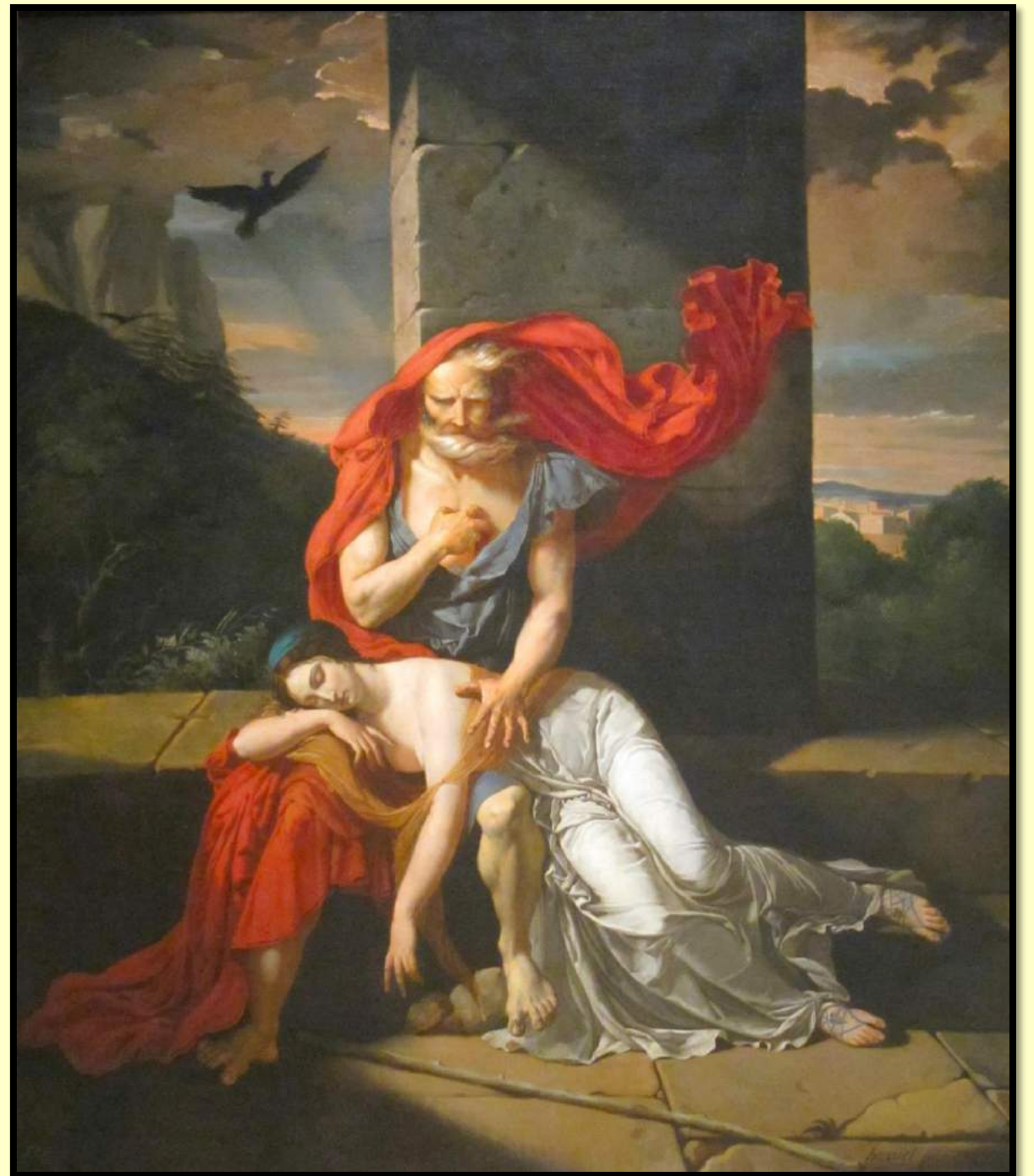
*‘He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him,
nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.
He was despised and rejected by men, a man of
sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from
whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we
esteemed him not.’*

Isaiah 53: 2-3
(on the servant of the Lord)

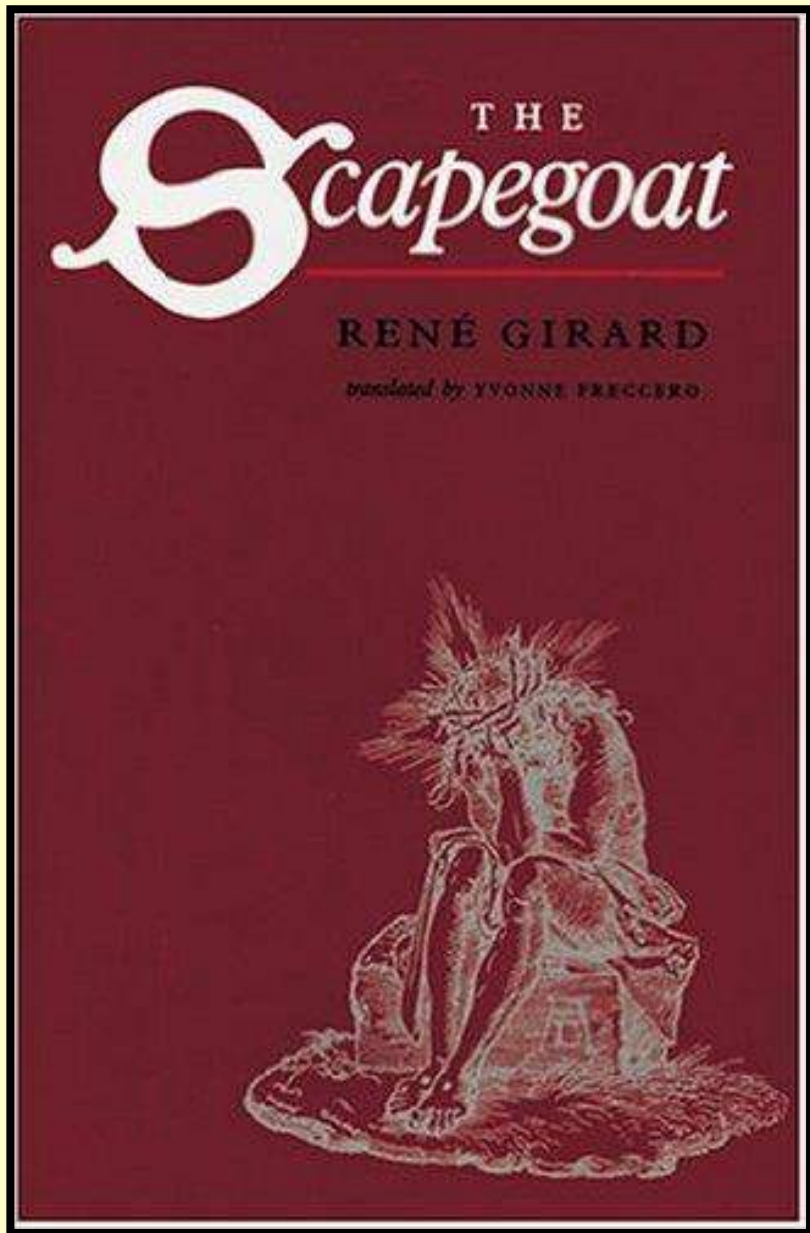
From Saviour to Scapegoat

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- Frazer argued that the deaths of kings thus aligned with scapegoat rituals
- So too, the deaths of heroes – disgraced, in exile, alone – but through their death able to provide a boon

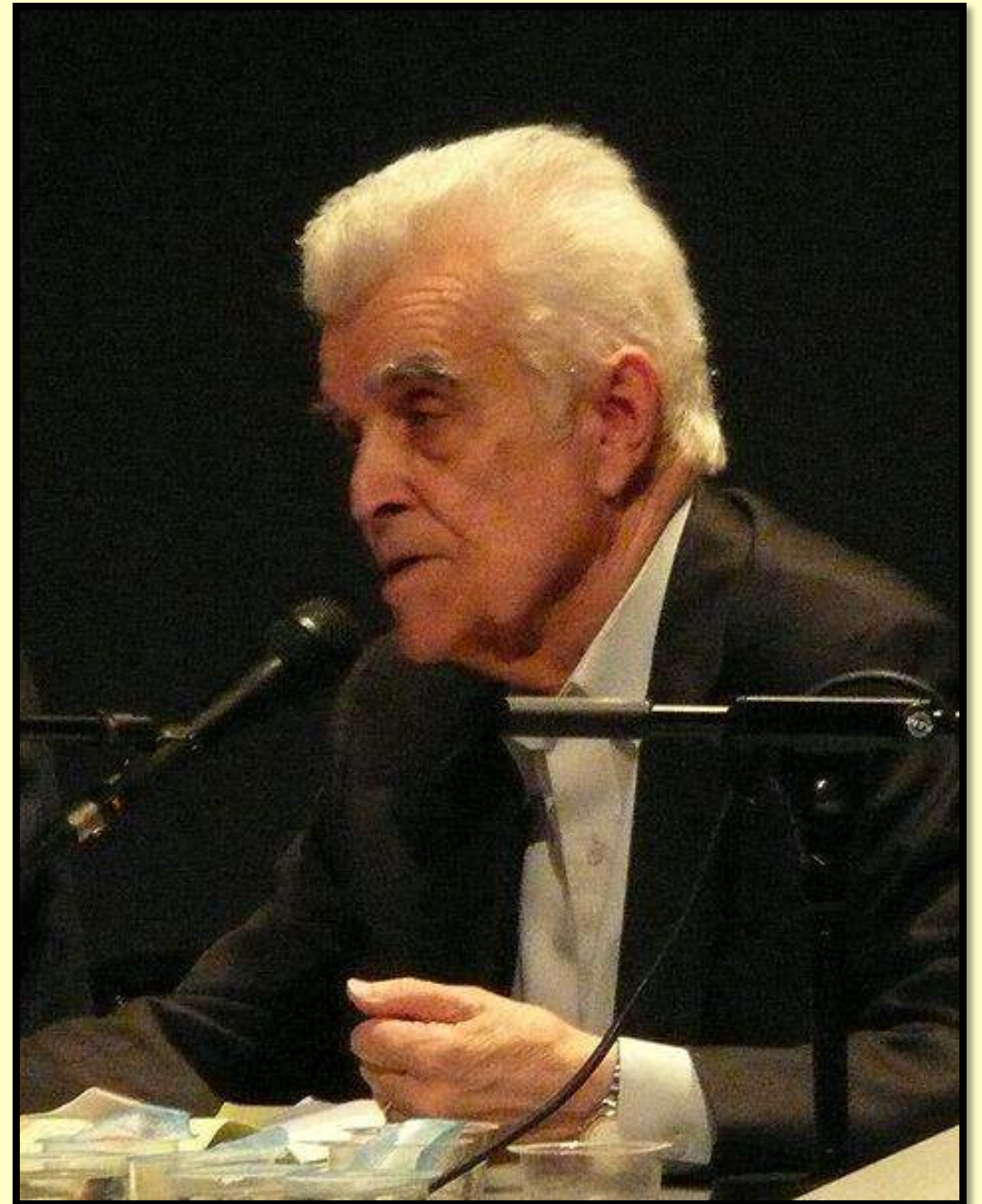
Oedipus at Colonus
Fulchran-Jean Harriet
1798







René Girard
1923-2015



René Girard

- ‘Mimetic desire’, rivalry, communal violence, scapegoating
- The scapegoat unites the community –
 - But it must be an unconscious mechanism
 - Community must truly believe in the guilt of the scapegoat
- Once the essential innocence of the scapegoat is recognized, the mechanism fails
- Jesus, then, represents – or should represent – a unique turning-point in history: the end of scapegoating

A classical painting depicting the head and shoulders of Jesus Christ. He is shown in profile, facing left, wearing a crown of thorns. The background is a soft, hazy landscape. The text "But – is the story of Jesus truly unique?" is overlaid in a white, serif font across the center of the image.

But – is the story of Jesus truly unique?

Finally – some more heroes to consider
(some of whom are indeed ‘suffering
servants’, and one at least of whom seems
to be a scapegoat...)

Frodo Baggins



Darth Vader



Aragorn



Jon Snow



Daenerys Targaryen



Luke Skywalker





Thank You!

Suggested Reading

- James G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, 3rd edition, 1906-1915.
- Otto Rank, *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero*, 1909.
- Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, 1928.
- Lord Raglan, *The Hero: A Study in Tradition, Myth, and Drama*, 1936.
- Joseph Campbell, *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*, 1949.
- Alan Dundes, *The Hero Pattern and the Life of Jesus*, 1976.
- René Girard, *The Scapegoat*, 1985.
- *In Quest of the Hero*, 1990 (with introduction by Robert A. Segal).
- Heather Alexander, *A Child's Introduction to Greek Mythology*, 2011.
- Charlie Campbell, *Scapegoat: A History of Blaming Other People*, 2011.
- M. Morford/R.J. Lenardon, *Classical Mythology*, 10th edition, 2013.
- Barry B. Powell, *Classical Myth*, 8th edition, 2014.